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THE ANGELS.

BY

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"Who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire."
—HEB. i. 7.



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PREFACE.

THE author of this unpretending volume regards it simply as an attempt to explain the teachings of the Bible concerning the holy and the evil angels. In examining the subject discussed he was particularly struck by two things: first, how little there is in our literature about the angels; and second, how much there is in the Bible about them. The book is designed to be popular rather than scholarly, intended for the masses rather than the few. If it shall be the means of stimulating Christian scholars to a closer study of the subject, and of giving Christian people truer ideas of the nature and offices of the angels, its publication will not be in vain.

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THE ANGELS.

CHAPTER I.

GRADATIONS IN THE RANKS OF BEINGS.

IN all God's universe there are gradations in the rank of being. We see all the types of irrational creatures on an ascending scale, till they approach very near the rational being man. Man is apparently the lowest of his kind, and all analogy would seem to require that there should be higher intelligences, just as there are higher animals than the polyp which begins the scale. So we find among all nations a belief in spiritual beings of a higher order than man—a belief which may be a tradition, coming down the line of generations from their great father Adam, of the radiant visitants who had walked lovingly with him

amid the bowers of Eden, and whose flaming sword had closed against him the way to the tree of life. All nature has been filled, by man's imagination, with spiritual beings. Fairies have danced on the moonlit sward, fays have floated in the evening breezes, and gnomes have held silent sway in the darkness of earth's caverns. The Greeks and Romans saw in the stream rippling over the grasses the green tresses of a Nereid's hair; in the rustle of the leaves the wooing of dryad and nymph; in the blue gleam of the sky the sheen of Athena's ægis; and when they walked amid the lovely scenes of nature, they walked not alone, but the friendly eyes of their gods were upon them and loving hands decked the earth for their joy.

Alas! far more barren and odious than classic mythology, with all its absurdity, is the modern philosophy which sees in all the powers of Nature neither the skilful fingers of gods and fauns, of nymphs and naiads, as did the Greeks, nor the loving care of a great Father using the ministry of angels, as

does the Christian, but the blind, pitiless movement of unintelligent force. Let me beg modern scientists, for the sake of all that is graceful and lovely in man's nature, if they will persist in saying "there is no God and all revelation is a farce," at least to restore to mankind the fairies and graces, and let their loving hands mould the fruit, paint the flowers, stretch the rainbow, and gild the sunset clouds. Let a man feel around him the constant ministry of superior intelligences, though they be but the creatures of his own imagination, rather than look upon this beautiful world as so much senseless machinery run by a force as unintelligent as the steam of his factories. That is a higher type of man who, looking upon a purple flower, sees a deity's sorrow for his lost Hyacinthus, than he who sees only so much oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon combining at random and causing beauty by chance. But it is nobler still to see in the flower a manifestation of that far-reaching love which hath made all things beautiful in their season.

The apostle Paul would have preached but a stern religion to the Greeks had he left their hills and valleys bare of their old divinities and showed them only the supreme God sitting in the upper heaven. Paul brought to the Greeks one only God, it is true, infinite in power, majesty, and wisdom, but with the great chasm between man and Jehovah filled somewhat, and filled from man's side, with "angels, principalities, and powers." These were no gods to be worshiped, but fellow-creatures of higher grade in the universe of intelligence; they inhabited not the stream, the forest, and the sea, but guided and guarded human footsteps, and went forth as ministering spirits "to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," differing as far from nymph and dryad as Jehovah differed from Jupiter, but still standing more nearly on man's level than the uncreated One, and therefore welcome beings to the imaginative minds of the Greeks. Revolting from the Roman Catholic worship of angels, the Protestant world have run rather to the other extreme, and have

ignored too completely their existence, and therefore have lost much of the comfort which a contemplation of their characters and offices might have brought us. Surely we can contemplate the angels and the aid they give us, with no prayer to them instead of to God, but rather with renewed gratitude to the Father who hath sent them forth as ministering spirits into the world.

The Bible is full of revelation concerning the angels; scarcely a page but makes some reference to them. They appear first as shouting for joy when God made the earth; again as ministers of wrath with flaming swords before the closed gates of paradise; and then on through all the history of our race, till in the grand closing scenes the great angel flies with the key of the bottomless pit to bind the old serpent that he deceive no more the nations of the earth. Let us follow the facts revealed, receiving only what can be clearly proved by the word of God.

Let us consider, first, the nature of the angels, and then more especially their employment.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANGELIC NATURE.

THERE have been many and fierce disputes as to whether the angels have bodies. The Council at Nice, A. D. 784, decided the question affirmatively, and that their bodies were composed of ether and light. This decision was not based upon any positive proof found in Scripture, but upon the fact that the philosophy of the day denied that spirit could act upon matter or matter upon spirit. Outside of Revelation, man can appeal only to his own constitution to decide this point. From his own nature he learns that his mind does act upon his body, controlling its movements, and, on the other hand, that the condition of his physical nature has great influence over his mind. Moreover, the Bible speaks always of the angels as spirits, as in Col. i. 16, and in the verse which Paul in this

same chapter quotes from the Psalmist: "He maketh his angels spirits." The Lateran Council decided that the angels were spiritual beings only, and in that opinion the great body of Christendom concur. It has even been contended that angels require food, from the passage in the Psalms which says "men did eat angels' food." But the literal meaning seems to be *superior* food, *excellent* food, or perhaps food from heaven, as the manna was found having apparently rained down from the sky. We must beware how we found a system of belief upon a single passage of our version of the Bible without a careful consultation of the other passages of Scripture which bear upon the same subject. !

It seems that the angels are now in a state of confirmed holiness; but they were once in a state of probation, from which Lucifer and his confederates fell. It seems from one verse in 1 Timothy that pride was the besetting sin which overtook angelic natures, but we cannot certainly affirm this, for Paul may have only meant that pride would cause one to

share the condemnation of Satan. Many and wild have been the conjectures concerning this sin in heaven. Some maintain that Satan desired to rule this world in God's stead, and therefore rebelled and tempted man to disobedience. Others, still more wildly, assert that when God announced to the angels that they must be servants to this new race which Christ loved, Lucifer in his pride refused such humiliation, and was driven from heaven for his disobedience. For all such views there is not the slightest warrant in Scripture, and we must believe only what is revealed ; which is that the angels were once in a state of probation, and the elect ones, having kept their first estate, are now confirmed in holiness by the power of God. It behooves us, however, to learn the great lesson of warning from heaven's revolt. If pure angels, when untempted, fell into sin, how much more danger is there for us, weak and sinful as we are by nature and surrounded by untold temptations ! Let us, then, as we work out our own salvation, do it "with fear and trembling," lest, through any

of the snares of the world, the flesh, or the devil, we fall into the condemnation of Satan.

That the angels are perfectly pure and holy we know from the frequent mention of them in the Bible as "holy angels," and from their dwelling in the presence of God. "He chargeth his angels with folly," Job tells us; and by the light of that declaration we see the great distance which separates the highest finite being from the Infinite, the mightiest creature from the almighty Creator. It is the same manifestation of angelic inferiority which is represented by the prophet in the angels covering their faces in the presence of Jehovah. They are perfect in obedience, and have no will nor desire but the will of God. They are mighty in power. This is shown by the works they accomplish. Recall, for instance, the rocking of Mount Sinai, the slaughter in Egypt, in the hosts of Sennacherib, and among the people cursed because of David's sin. They are expressly said to "excel in strength." That Michael could destroy our entire race in a night we can readily believe.

But great as is their strength, it is controlled by the most perfect obedience to the will of God, so that a child would be safe among them if God willed it, and all earth's myriads of warriors, in all ages, flanked by every fallen angel, would be powerless before their might did God speak the word that bade them strike. They are also superior in wisdom. Spectators of the creation of the material universe; learning, for six thousand years at least, and it may be for ages before, the great lessons of God's might and glory, they surpass Solomon as far in wisdom as they surpass Samson in strength.

As we thus render to the angels a due acknowledgment of their greatness and strength we must be careful not to endow them in our thoughts with the attributes of God. Though powerful, they are not omnipotent. They must use means to accomplish ends; they must act in accordance with the laws which govern them, and which govern the rest of God's creation; they are wise, but they are not omniscient. Many things they earnestly

desire to look into ; many a mystery has been hidden from them from the foundation of the world ; and they as well as we shall be learning more and more of God through all the long ages of eternity. And yet, mighty as are their intellects, never will they have measured the heights and depths of the love of God, which passeth not only all human, but also all angelic, understanding. Nor can we allow ourselves to look upon the angels as omnipresent—an attribute which belongs to God alone. Gabriel may be standing now in the midst of some worshipping congregation in our own land, or he may be listening to the words of some missionary in the wilds of Africa, or he may be sent on a mission afar off, beyond the sweep of earth's greatest telescope. But if he is here, he is not yonder ; swift as is his power of movement, he cannot occupy different places at the same time. Witness the announcement which Gabriel made to Daniel, that he was delayed in answering the prayer of the prophet by the necessity of withstanding the prince of Persia for

twenty-one days. In an after vision of the same prophet we can catch some idea of the wonderful rapidity of motion of the angels. Daniel addressed himself to God in prayer; and after he began praying, Gabriel was commanded to go to him, and reached his side ere he had concluded. In the ninth chapter of Daniel's prophecy we find it thus recorded: "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. AT THE BEGINNING OF THY SUPPLICATIONS the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved."]

At what point in the universe is that heaven

of heavens where the angels stand around the Throne, we do not know. That heaven is a *place* as well as a *state* there is abundant reason to believe. It has been supposed to be far beyond the remotest star whose light we can see. Rapidly as light moves, years are necessary for it to come to us from those distant suns ; judge, then, of the rapidity of angelic motion, when Gabriel came from heaven itself ere Daniel's evening prayer was ended. Yet passing human conception as such rapidity is, we must not confound it with the omnipresence of the Creator, who inhabiteth immensity and needs no coming, in order to be with every one of his creatures at one and the same time.

Hence the folly, to say nothing of the sin, of angel worship. Suppose you pray to Michael, and Michael at that moment is busily engaged in some remote star cluster ; what will become of your prayer ? Suppose he is even engaged on the earth at the time, and you and others pray to him to intercede for you ; while he is pleading with God for the others, your life may be ended, your sorrow may

come upon you, and the intercession is too late. What folly to pray to a finite angel, when there is an infinite Ear ever open to listen to your cry—an infinite Heart ever glowing with love and mercy—an infinite Hand never too busy, amid all the cares of worlds, to guide the creature who shall cling to it with the faith of a little child !

It is not only foolish to worship angels, it is sinful also, and doubly foolish in that it is sinful. Satan rejoices when we render to him the worship and obedience due only to God, but the holy angels feel only horror and anger at such blasphemy. When the priest bids you pray to Michael, remember that to do so you would not only offend a jealous God, but you would fill the archangel himself with holy indignation and wrath. He has no vanity to be flattered by receiving honor due to his Master ; and will punish you, if God command it, with as cheerful alacrity for worshiping himself as for passing through the fire of Moloch. Here, then, are conclusive reasons against angel worship : they are not omnipresent, and may not

hear us ; they are finite, and cannot aid all at once ; they are holy, and therefore will feel only indignation at such impiety. } But, above all, to show the folly of such prayer, Christ Jesus is the Mediator who intercedes for us ; and if God will not hear the pleading voice of his own Son, think you he would listen if all his creatures cried out with one voice for your salvation ? When the king's son stands your friend, will you kneel to the servants ?

There remains to notice, with reference to the nature of angels, that there are ranks and gradations among them, either in holiness and power or in office, most probably in both. The Bible speaks of the archangel, who would seem to be the highest of created intelligences. We are told of Michael and his angels contending with Satan, showing that Michael had command over many of his fellow-spirits. Christ speaks of "legions of angels," which would seem to indicate somewhat of the rank and discipline of an army, and Paul speaks of "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers," which wellnigh

all agree in believing to be different orders of angels. But precisely in what respects they differ, and which rank we should consider the highest, whether "thrones" or "dominions" or "principalities" or "powers," we cannot know till we stand in their midst, "equal to the angels." That some excel in wisdom and others in zeal may be surmised, but not certainly known, from the names used to designate them, "cherubim" meaning the "knowing ones," or full of knowledge, while "seraphim" means the "burning ones," or full of zeal. Curious, but perhaps unprofitable, speculation might be brought to bear upon these names to show the comparative rank in God's esteem of *knowledge* and *love* by the fact that the "seraphim," the "burning ones," stand higher in heaven and seemingly nearer the throne than the "cherubim," the "knowing ones," and this would argue the superiority of *love* to *knowledge*.

Frequent mention is made in the Bible of the cherubim from the time when they stood with flaming sword guarding the way to the

tree of life, but only once is the veil lifted so high that we can see the burning faces of the seraphim as they stand around the throne of God, and that is in the sublime vision of Isaiah (vi. 1-3): "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

With Michael as archangel; with seraphim more exalted than cherubim; with "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers" among the angelic ranks, we can find in heaven none of that perfect equality which exists neither on earth nor in hell, but only in the dreams of some human beings. It is not wrong that distinctions exist among men; it is according to the order of creation and the will of God that it should be so. To assert the contrary savors of communism and atheism. Such

distinctions become sinful only when they have a wrong basis.

We must reserve the consideration of the employments of the angels for another chapter. Looking upon these glorious beings as they flash forth from the pages of Revelation, let us bow in renewed love and reverence before the throne of their Creator and ours, and let us strive to imitate them in their burning love, their untiring zeal, and their unquestioning obedience, till at last, by the mercies of our Lord, who died to save us, we who were made "a little lower than the angels" shall stand in their glorious company, as our elder Brother hath promised us, "equal to the angels."

CHAPTER III.

THE ANGELIC NATURE.

THE shadows of midnight lay over the plains of Israel, and the light of the stars gleamed silently upon the green hillsides where the shepherds lay watching their flocks. Only the soft footfall of the sheep at their pasture, the lonely cry of the bittern by the Sea of Galilee, and the murmur of the stream flowing by broke the stillness of the midnight. I love to imagine what were the thoughts of those shepherds as they rested upon the cool green sward and looked up to the silent stars. Surely they were pious men, who waited for the redemption of Israel, or they would not have been so highly honored. It may be they spoke softly to each other of another night upon these plains of Canaan, when, as the weary patriarch lay sleeping upon his pillow of stone, the ladder was let down from

the opened heavens, and the angels of God ascended and descended upon it. Alas! many a weary year has passed since that ladder was withdrawn and the heavens were closed, many a weary night since the swift gleam of angel face had broken the darkness as the messenger came from the Lord to prophet or to king. And as along the distant highway they heard the hollow tread of the Roman legion marching from Jerusalem to the mountains of Syria, where the natives are rising against the iron yoke which binds a subject world, perhaps they speak more sadly still of their conqueror's power, of the departed glory of their proud nation, and of the days when David ruled the heathen and the kings of the earth bowed before the throne of Solomon. It may be they lingered long when they came to speak of the promised King who should inherit the throne of his father David, to whom the nations of the earth should be given, and of whose kingdom there should be no end. As they speak of the Shiloh which should come ere the sceptre, trembling now in Her-

od's grasp, had departed from Judah, one rises from his resting-place, and standing with bared head looking toward the distant Bethlehem Ephratah from which the Prince shall come, repeats with faltering lips the despondent words of the Psalmist: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"

While yet the words linger upon the air—words rising in many a waiting heart through all the faithful among the people—suddenly the heavens were lighted up above them as if the noonday sun had shone forth; and, behold, above their heads stood an angel of God, radiant with that heavenly glory which no human eye can see unterrified. God has not forgotten: once more he has heard his people's cry; and a deliverer comes, not from the palace of Pharaoh, but from the manger of Bethlehem. "They were sore afraid," Luke tells us; and that feeling we can never appreciate unless we free ourselves from the conventional ideas concerning angels, impressed upon our

minds in childhood by the pictures made of them. Angels are not slim-waisted girls with inane faces and beautifully flowing hair; they are not baby heads with well-feathered wings. Such things are farther from representing the might and grandeur of heaven's warriors than is a quiet mole-hill from shadowing forth the awful sublimity of the great volcano from whose opened throat pour thundering rivers of fire over the cities below.

The representation of cherubim on the ark of God was not intended to give us an idea of the form of those beings, nor was it a picture of them in any sense, but only the symbol of certain of their prominent characteristics. And an algebraist might as well contend that his x is a picture of the army of men which it may represent in a problem, as for us to endeavor to imagine the form of the cherubim from the figures upon the ark of the Covenant. The wings with which they cover their feet are only the x which represents their humility, and the twain with which they fly stand only for their swift obedience to the

commands of God; their heads represent only their mighty intellect; their eyes turned on the resting-place of the Shechinah show their ceaseless thoughts of God, in whom they live, move, and have their being. To draw these symbols and show them to our children as pictures of the angels is as foolish as if an artist, when told to paint an army, should paint only an enormous x , because, forsooth, in a problem that character had been used to stand for the army, which was the unknown quantity.

Let us do better justice to the angels as we stand by these sorely-frightened shepherds and look upon the angel whose presence shines round about them. Let us remember that when seen and recognized by men in the Bible the story always is, "they were sore afraid," or "fell at their feet as dead." Could you fall thus at the feet of the mild-eyed maidens with doves' wings which we see in the pictures of all the painters? The angelic countenance is said to be "like the lightning." We say so often, "as swift as lightning," that

we forget, as we read of the angels' countenance, the overpowering blaze of light before which we involuntarily shade our eyes lest they be blinded; and that brilliance which is unendurable to us even as a momentary flash shines steadily in the faces of the angels. And this light the painters represent by giving their winged girls *yellow hair*! Bah! Men paint the cherubim sometimes as laboriously engaged in holding up some fantastic cornice. The Greeks had truer ideas even concerning their demigods; you never find Hercules bending down to sustain upon his mighty shoulders a basket of flowers.

Of the essence of spirit we know nothing—absolutely nothing; and we might as well attempt to draw pictures of electricity, magnetism, or gravitation as of those wondrous spirits whose home is heaven. And if, as is right and according to reason, we judge their power and greatness by the deeds they accomplish; if, told to portray the angels, we think at once of all that the Bible tells us of their might—of the trembling Sinai rocked by

their strong hands ; of the seventy thousand lying dead beneath one angelic sword when David's sin brought wrath upon Israel ; of the Roman soldiers lying like dead men on their faces before the open door of the sepulchre,—if we think of all these and of many other instances in which men were sorely afraid in the presence of the angels, then how can we paint the cherubim as bodiless infants ? Shall we not rather turn in despair from such representation, saying only in the language of inspiration, “He maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire” ?

If the same angel stood now before us as he stood before the shepherds of Galilee, our only feeling would be intense terror ; and the words of the evangelist would be as true of us as of them : “They were sore afraid.” Time was when man had not this terror of the angels ;—when the visits of the heavenly ones were watched for with eager longing and welcomed with glad rejoicing, as they walked with Adam and Eve amid the fragrance of Eden, and talked of the goodness and great-

ness of God ;—when they were to innocent man only brothers of superior knowledge and vaster power, only patient teachers of his ignorance and sympathizing friends in his joys. But from the time when the angel who but yesterday had walked and talked in sweet converse with Adam now held in his flaming hand the sword of fire to drive back the guilty pair from their well-remembered haunts in Paradise, all their descendants have seen the angels only sword-armed for vengeance, and have been at the sight “sore afraid.” Come they in mercy or come they in wrath, bearing the message of peace and good-will or of sudden destruction and vengeance, nevertheless in their presence man is “sore afraid,” and no words of comfort, no assurance of blessing, can prevent his trembling or completely restore his courage.

If Christ had not died, then we should do well to tremble before the faces of these mighty beings who could so easily blot our race from the face of the earth. But now—praise to his love !—we who are called by his

name have no reason to fear in their presence. Weak and feeble we may be, yet this is no reason to fear the angelic strength, but rather to rejoice therein. We are the children of the King; they his trusted servants and tried warriors, whose duty and pleasure it is to serve and defend us. We are wandering from our Father's house, and fierce foes beset us on all sides—foes too strong for the unassisted strength of such babes in Christ as we; and as our cry goes up to a Father more loving and tender far than any earthly parent, he sends to our aid the flower of his celestial army—warriors who have often conquered the foe that now attacks us—warriors whose might no created power can withstand. And as they come to our rescue in glittering ranks, as they stand with their chariots of fire like a rampart round about us, we draw back in terror from them, and are “sore afraid.”

We know they are faithful and true to the King, obedient to his slightest word, striving ever to obey his will, loving what he loves, hating what he hates, dangerous only to his

enemies, never to his children; yet when we see them or think of their eyes resting upon us, we are "sore afraid"—*we* who profess to be the "children of the heavenly King." Why is this? That a young prince, though but a child, is afraid of his father's warriors shows something wrong. Either the king is not a loving father, or is not a true sovereign, or the soldiers are but eye-servants and rebellious against his power, or the young prince is a changeling, and no true prince. Let us examine closely why we fear as we do our Father's servants, that if the fault is in our own hearts we may strive to correct it. Why are we "sore afraid"? Is not God a loving Father? Has he ever given us a stone when we have asked for bread, or a serpent when we needed a fish? Love is proved by its kindness to the loved ones; has God been kind to his creatures? Love crowns its loved with gracious gifts; has he been sparing toward us or his right hand niggardly? Love seeks the happiness of the loved; looking over the fair and pleasant world in which he

has placed us, could we in a lifetime enumerate the many things he has done for our happiness? Take from the world the effects of sin, and does not all creation proclaim, "God is love"?

Does God fail in his government as sovereign, that we his children are sore afraid in the presence of his warriors? Men have been found to deny his sovereignty over the mighty power of mankind, to refuse to believe he could control such a race of Anakim as Adam's descendants. They grant him the power to create a world like this, or a thousand larger ones; but in the act of creation his power is exhausted, and his sovereignty extends only to deciding what he shall form, not how he shall govern it. They give Jehovah very much such control over men as we have over the destinies of Europe. We can watch the progress of events, with no power to alter or influence; and those who are wise among us can read the signs of the times and decide somewhat of the future of the nations. God, being wiser than we, can tell, as the most far-

seeing of us cannot, what the harvest will be from the seed they are sowing; but he is as powerless as we to control the seed that is sown or the fruit it shall bring forth. Monstrous as such a doctrine seems when put into plain, blunt English, when stripped of all mystic words concerning the marvelous power of man's free-will, there are nevertheless thousands who believe it. Let us be thankful that we do not worship such a God; that our God "doth according to his will," not only "in the army of heaven," but also "among the inhabitants of the earth;" and that men and angels are alike powerless to "stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?" However powerless some theologians represent God to be upon earth, none have ever been found to limit his power "in the army of heaven;" there he reigns a sovereign, absolute, irresponsible, and all-powerful. Knowing, then, his complete control over the angels, that they have no will but his and are zealous to show their obedience, why are we sore afraid in their presence? If God cannot

control men because of their free-will, we may well be afraid of our fellows, but why should we fear the angels?

If, then, God is lacking neither in love nor in power, is the reason for our fear to be found in the angels themselves? Are they only eye-servants, yielding to the King they fear only a sullen obedience while in heaven, and delighting to injure what he loves when they wander upon earth? Could any such thought as this have found place in the minds of the shepherds when the angel appeared before them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them? On just such a glorious night angels had ascended and descended the ladder which Jacob saw let down from the opened heavens; did they injure the sleeping patriarch? These shepherds, in all probability, had heard as well as we of that wonderful scene when the weary Elijah lay sleeping beneath the juniper tree, and the angel stood by his side engaged in the lowly duty of cooking bread to satisfy the prophet's hunger, acting thus a menial's part toward a poor worm of

the dust as cheerfully and promptly as if his duty had been to guide a new-made planet in its course around the sun.

But we know, far more than the shepherds, of the kindness and protection which the angels extend to men ; to us it hath been expressly revealed that they are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” We have seen them sent to Joppa to summon Peter to go to the praying centurion ; nay, we have seen them in the dungeon of the apostle, freeing his limbs from the chains and guiding him safely past the soldiers, lying as dead, through the opened iron gates. We have seen them, it is true, punishing guilty men, smiting the boasting Herod as the people cry out, “It is the voice of a god and not of a man ;” we have seen them in John’s vision bearing the vials of God’s wrath and pouring them upon the nations at the sound of the seven trumpets of vengeance. We see them, too, reaping the harvest of the world, gathering the tares and the wheat ; and while the wheat in golden

sheaves is borne to the feet of the King, the tares are thrown into fire unquenchable. But all this terrible work the angels do only at the command of the Lord ; they never appear upon the stage of revelation except in strict obedience to the word of Jehovah. Terrible when his command goes forth against his enemies, they harm not one of the numbered hairs of the heads of his children. In the very unquestioning obedience to his commands to take vengeance on his foes we find a reason why we should not fear the angels, but rather rely upon their strength ; for if, when God bids them strike his enemies, they comply unhesitatingly, so much the more will they obey when the command comes to guard his children.

If, then, there is no reason in the nature of God nor in the character of the angels that we should fear them, why is the one unvarying record when they appear to the children of men, "And they were sore afraid" ? It is in the nature of man to dread unexplained power, to fear mysterious strength ; but the

power and strength of the angels are fully explained to us in the Bible; and if the explanation had not been given, we are told that they are controlled by our heavenly Father, and that should suffice. Does a child fear the deadliest instrument when held by his father's hand? The poet-philosopher was right when he said, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." Knowing that we have violated the law, when we see the ministers of its vengeance we are indeed "sore afraid." We profess, it may be, to love God and to trust Christ for salvation, but we know in our heart of hearts that often, so often, our deeds and motives give the lie to our lips when we say we love him. We claim to love God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength, and we think of his pleasure in perhaps one act in a hundred of our daily lives. No wonder, when we see the angels and think of their zeal for the glory of God, we are "sore afraid;" no wonder we shrink back from the swords they bear. But when we know that not only our Sunday worship, but all the acts of our lives,

whether eating or drinking, or whatsoever we do, are in accordance with the will of God and done for his glory, then we can look on their radiant faces with love and trust rather than fear, and stand the more boldly in the great conflict because round about us are encamped the mighty legions of our Father.

But if we are impenitent and careless of God's law, then we do well to be "sore afraid" when we stand in the presence of the angels. Christ will have mercy if we cry to him, but the angels have no weak pity for the incorrigibly wicked, no sickly compassion for the impenitent guilty. They dwell in the light and have no fellowship with darkness; and ready as they ever are to do loving service for those who are God's children, they are as ready to destroy his enemies. Sooner expect the rocks to fall on you and the mountains to cover you, than an angel to spare when ordered to punish. As the decree of justice goes forth Jesus may stretch out his pierced hands and plead, "Spare yet this year that it may bring forth fruit when I shall labor upon it," but

the angel commanded to cut down the barren tree never intercedes for it, but goes instantly to obey, with no word of beseeching love.

Here again, as we think of their character, we can see the absurdity of angel-worship. Perfectly pure themselves, in all their hosts there was no eye to pity guilty and impenitent man. They love those whom God loves, and there is no service too lowly to be done for their comfort ; but toward all who reject God's authority they feel only the burning indignation which they feel toward Satan and his demons. When a sinner is saved, they rejoice, because God is glorified ; when he is damned, they shout, "Alleluiah ! just and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord almighty !"

"They were sore afraid." It brings to my mind the story of the little beggar who hung round the guarded door of the palace, longing to see the king's face and proffer some slight request. But he feared the steel-clad warriors guarding the passway, and rightly feared them, for they would not have allowed him to enter. The king's only son, a little boy,

looked out from the palace, and seeing the little beggar went to his side to ask what he wanted. Learning his wish, the young prince caught him by the hand and carried him in. The mailed warriors looked with loving eyes on the young heir to the throne, and made respectful way for his companion, till they gained unmolested the presence of the king. Christians, let us not stand trembling before the palace guards; only pray to the King's well-beloved Son, and he will come to our side; and holding closely to his hand, we shall go in peace to his Father's face.

Though the closing scenes of earth shall be fearful from the exhibition of angelic might; though powerful hands are rolling the heavens together as a scroll and summoning the birds of the air to their final feast; though they roll the stars from their places and cover the sun with blood and the moon with sackcloth; though round us gleam the swords of Michael's host driving Lucifer to the pit where stands an angel bearing in his mighty hands the chains of darkness; though the earth trem-

bles and blazes at the touch of their flaming feet, and the sea shrinks back abashed before the gleam of their fiery eyes,—yet be ye not afraid; hold tightly, clasp the hand which guides you, and you shall see those grand forms bow in obeisance before you; you shall see the fire of vengeance gleaming in their eyes changed to love and reverence; and you shall feel beneath you only the swift pulsings of the mighty wings which bear you up from the turmoil and conflicts of earth to the fullness of joy at the right hand of God.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OCCUPATIONS OF ANGELS.

I HAVE spoken in previous chapters of the nature of the angels, and now I come to speak of their occupations in the economy of the universe. Outside of this world we know little of their employment, though many and wild have been the conjectures concerning their duties on other planets. It has been supposed, because it is said that at the creation "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," that each angel had charge of a world, and that Lucifer was once the ruler of the brightest of the heavenly bodies. How much truth there may be in such dreams as this we cannot know, for the Bible is silent concerning all other planets than our own. Nor is it strange that Revelation should give so little information concerning other worlds. To have told us of the inhab-

itants of Mars and of the planets of Sirius could have contributed to no useful end, and would have served only to gratify man's idle curiosity.

If a mighty monarch should send offers of peace to a handful of rebels in a remote corner of his empire, think you he would fill up his communication with elaborate accounts of the governments of other provinces? Would he not rather confine himself strictly to the faults of which the insurgents had themselves been guilty, the expiation which he required, and the results of accepting or refusing his terms of pardon, with perhaps such incidental reference to his other provinces as might impress upon their minds the greatness of the sovereign against whom they had rebelled? And is not this just what God has done in the Bible, sealing all knowledge of our sister planets, yet giving us some faint glimpses of the glories of his palace home? Is it not foolish and wicked to pry into this proclamation of pardon, in order to find a full history in detail of other worlds, and refuse to listen to the

terms it offers, because it does not explain the conditions of the universe?

Of the employment of the angels in heaven we know comparatively little. They are there seen engaged in praising God ; sometimes they are gathered together, as when Satan appeared among them as the accuser of Job ; but how often we cannot tell. When there, they sing their anthems to God's praise, and say to each other softly, as if not daring to address him directly, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts ! the whole earth is full of his glory."

It is of their duties and employments in 7 connection with man of which the Scriptures speak most fully ; and there is scarcely a chapter which does not throw more or less light on their agency here. They appear first after man's creation as ministers of God's wrath, and our first knowledge of the angels is gathered from the angry light of that flaming sword guarding the entrance of Paradise. Nor is that the only instance in which they were the instruments of God's vengeance. When the wickedness of the cities of the

plain waxed great, and God determined to destroy them, he sent his angels to rescue righteous Lot from the coming doom, and they said to Lot, "WE will destroy this place because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." (And again, when the first-born in Egypt should be destroyed, God sent forth an angel, whose swift stroke spared no first-born in all the land. When David's sin brought punishment upon his people, and he chose, of the punishments offered, three days of pestilence, again God made use of the sword of an angel, and slew three score and ten thousand of the people.

Just here let me pause a moment to call attention to this slaughter. It is called a pestilence; and we have no reason to suppose that it differed materially from any other pestilence which has ever desolated the earth. Yet we never think of an angelic sword in connection with meningitis, small-pox, cholera, or yellow fever. No; we talk of secondary causes; and in our eager searching into "malaria" we

forget oftentimes the personal will of God, which may have been the immediate cause of the plague. In this place God removes the veil from our eyes and shows us the angel with drawn sword pointing toward Jerusalem, standing silent and motionless at the command of the Lord, awaiting the word which shall bid him go forward or else sheathe his sword. And if our eyes were opened when the dreaded pestilence goes on its fearful way through the land, we should see, not malaria nor poisonous infusoria, of which we hear so much, but the gleaming of an angel's sword inflicting God's vengeance on a guilty land. Why not? Can we suppose the thousands swept away by that ancient pestilence knew any more than we do of the presence of the angel? Did not mothers then, as now, regret that their children had been "exposed to contagion" when they fell pierced by that sword? Much oftener than we in our blindness dream, the events that befall us are no senseless action of unconscious laws, but directly caused by some living intelligence acting by God's command.

And it seems to me no one can read carefully these Old Testament narratives without feeling ever around him the action, and constant action, of a personal God. He will learn to look from the glazing eyes and stiffening limbs of earth's plague-stricken ones up into the eyes of fire which guided the stroke of the destroying sword; to look with Job beyond the Chaldeans and Sabeans, the lightning and wind, and all other so-called secondary causes, to the hand that is chastising; and to say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

It is wonderful to think of the power the angels have over material things. Doubtless if Abraham, as he watched the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, had been a philosopher instead of "the friend of God," he would have seen only a fearful volcanic eruption in the flames that overwhelmed those devoted cities of the plain; yet it was caused by the power of those "men" who had rescued Lot from the fiery death. If Pliny had been what Abraham was as he also watched the

destruction of the cities of a Roman plain, would he have seen no angel, solemn and stern, standing upon the fiery brow of that mountain, and bringing from its depths with his mighty hand the glowing flood which for long centuries should blot Herculaneum and Pompeii from human remembrance? Do not suppose that I would claim that angelic hands rather than the laws of matter cause all the mighty convulsions that agitate the earth; but, with the open Bible before us, do we not feel that theirs may be the agency often used in so-called natural phenomena? If angels hurled the thunderbolt which shook Sinai to its centre, and even a fallen angel brought the swift fire from heaven upon the cattle of Job, shall we affirm that these instances mentioned in the Bible are the only ones in which angels and devils have been the movers of lightnings and storms?

Appearing first as the ministers of God's wrath, we find them so all along the line of the ages. Sennacherib's host fell before an angel; Herod, hearing with complacency the

impious shout of the people, "It is the voice of a god and not of a man," was smitten by an angel's hand; and when the end shall come, and the harvest of wheat and tares is fully ripe for the sickle, the angel reapers shall come to reap the whitened fields, and while some bear the gathered sheaves to the granary above, shouting as they go the glad harvest-home of immortality, others shall carry the tares from the land they have polluted to the blazing gulf which shall consume them utterly.

Again, the angels are God's warriors. They are valiant soldiers, tried and true in the great conflict of truth with error, of sin with holiness, of light with darkness. Very perplexing and mysterious, yet full of breathless interest, are the glimpses which are given us in Revelation of the fierce warfare between mighty foes which goes on around us, all the more fiercely as time passes on and the great adversary feels more and more keenly that his day is drawing to a close. If God would open our eyes as he did the eyes of the prophet's

servant, we might see around us to-day not only the horses and chariots of fire standing ready to defend and protect us, but flashing swords and gleaming spears, as angelic sentinels drive back from our midst Satan and his angels, striving to catch away the word from the hearts of the hearers, or else so to mingle with it worldly cares and desires that it shall be altogether unfruitful.

Some have supposed that the spiritual conflicts by devils and angels, as spoken of in the Bible, are meant only to describe the principles of truth and wrong which are ever striving for mastery in the world with varying success. But though we often personify principles in ordinary discourse, yet we cannot thus interpret the account of spirits given us in Revelation. The history of their deeds is too definite and straightforward. Had it been the design of the Scriptures to represent angels and devils as distinct personalities, more definite language could not have been used; so that he who believes the Bible must believe that Michael and Satan are as truly persons

as Peter and Paul ; and any system of interpretation which would eliminate the angels and make of them mere symbols of principles would overthrow all history and all language. So long as we accept the Bible as God's word we must believe that real personalities go to and fro in the earth, some seeking whom they may devour and others striving to defend and protect the chosen of God. It may be, Christian believer, in the long contest you had the other day with yourself to guard against some sin, known as you think only to your own conscience, that an angel and a devil stood by you, the one strengthening and the other tempting, and in the eternity to come that angel may approach you and remind you of that struggle, may tell you the motives he suggested why you should do right and the reasons the devil gave why the sin would be excusable. Reader, have you had such a contest lately ? And if in the hereafter the angel should recall it to your mind, would it be to rejoice in your victory or to lament your downfall ? Did Satan persuade you that the

thing you meditated was not so bad, after all, for hundreds of Christians as good as you are in the habit of doing the like? or did the angel prevail upon you to do all things for the glory of God?

We find in the Bible many instances of the warfare in which the angels are engaged, sometimes with spiritual foes, sometimes with ungodly men, and sometimes we can scarcely tell which class of opponents is meant from the terms used to designate them. When Satan attacked Job, God himself came to the defence of his servant; and in that scene angels seem to have been merely spectators. Again, when Joshua the high priest was laboring to restore the ancient laws in Jerusalem, and Satan stood at his right hand to oppose him, there is a difference of opinion among commentators as to whether the being who said, "The Lord rebuke thee," was an angel or Christ. It seems impossible to decide this definitely, for one or two verses, as recorded in the third chapter of Zechariah, would seem to refer to Christ, while the rest of the account

could be most easily understood upon the supposition that a created angel here opposed the wiles of Satan and defended Joshua from his attacks. I am not one of those who would wrest Scripture from its plain meaning, in order to find Christ everywhere, and thus do away, so far as possible, with the ministration of angels. The Angel of the covenant, of whom the Almighty bade the children of Israel beware, because his name was in him and he would not forgive their transgressions—that Angel certainly was Christ, as was most probably the Man who announced to Joshua that he came as Captain of the Lord's host, and also the first glorious being whom Daniel saw in his vision. Beyond these instances, I incline to the opinion that wherever "the angel of the Lord" is mentioned a created angel is to be understood.

There is no more interesting account of angelic warfare than that given by Gabriel himself in the book of Daniel. For three weeks Daniel had been fasting and praying, and at the end of that time Gabriel came to

him, saying, "Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thyself to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the prince of Persia." Interpret this as you may, it gives us an insight into great mysteries and wonders. Gabriel, charged to go to Daniel so soon as the mission against the prince of Persia was ended, was delayed in that contest *twenty-one days*, till finally Michael came to his assistance. Who was this prince of Persia? The supposition some have made, that he was a holy angel who had charge of the affairs of Persia, as Gabriel had charge of the Jews, and they strove for the mastery of their special nation, can have not the slightest shadow of foundation. There can be no rivalry, ambitious jealousy, or contention among the angels of God; each acts in obedience to God's command with an eye single to

his glory ; and having thus entire concord in aim and feeling, what room for contention among them ? Whether by the prince of Persia is meant Cambyses the king, or some fallen angel entrusted with special charge of his master's interests among the Persians by the prince of this world, is a matter in dispute among theologians. That he was a demon seems probable from the fact that he is called a " prince ;" and Michael, known to be an angel, is so styled in the same verse ; while men are called " kings." But against this supposition is the fact that nowhere else in Scripture are evil spirits represented as having charge of special kingdoms ; and the uniform principle of interpretation requires us not to introduce superhuman beings when men might be meant in the sacred narrative. The fact that Michael was sent to Gabriel's assistance would seem, again, to imply a more powerful adversary than man. However that may be, we see the chief men of Persia assembled together, deliberating upon the affairs of state, and in their midst the angel Gabriel

striving to prevent any decision injurious to God's chosen people; it may be striving only with the evil natures of those haughty princes, it may be with some mighty fallen angel or angels, till God sends from heaven the great Michael, and together they avert the threatened calamity. Over how many other earthly assemblies do these contests go on? How many a persecution has been averted by Gabriel and Michael? How often have angelic hands closed the mouths of raging human lions, so that they were powerless for harm to God's people? When Luther stood with his life in his hand facing the diet of Worms, was Gabriel there protecting him? Did Michael come as the contest waxed hot and Satan aided his servants? Or did the direct voice of a Greater than they speak to waiting demons and raging men, saying, "Do mine anointed no harm"?

In one great contest, briefly referred to by the sacred writer, neither man nor God was engaged, but only angels and demons. Moses lay calmly enough in death upon the lonely mountain-top from which he had viewed the

promised land, but Jude lifts the veil for a moment, and shows us the mightiest of God's creatures contending over that body upon Mount Nebo. For a moment we see them contending; we hear only the restrained answer of Michael, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan;" and then the curtain falls; to all our eager inquiries as to the reason and result of the contest Revelation is persistently dumb. Many and wild have been the conjectures as to the object of this strife, and the reason why Satan should contend for the body of Moses. It seems to me the literal body of Moses is meant, and no "type," either of Jewish laws or the Jewish nation. Perhaps Michael desired to bury the body secretly, as God had commanded, and Satan desired an open burial and a noble sepulchre, that he might entice the Jews to worship it, as Mohammedans have worshiped the tomb at Mecca, and as Romanists have worshiped the cross; but of this the Bible is silent, and all conjectures are vain.

Jude was contrasting the humility and forbearance of the angels with the pride and

presumption of men. Beyond this he shows two great facts: first, that Michael is an exalted created being, and not, as some suppose, Christ the Lord; and second, that all around us in this world spiritual conflicts are raging, Michael and his angels contending with Satan and his angels. Incidentally it shows us the high value placed upon our race when we see the archangel and the chief adversary disputing over the clay tenement of one of earth's children even after the free spirit had returned to God who gave it.

We have seen that God uses the angels as ministers of wrath to execute vengeance upon guilty men, and also that they are his warriors, tried and true, in the great conflict which is waged with the powers of darkness. And for this latter gracious revelation let us thank God and take courage; for we are encompassed about by so great a cloud, not only of witnesses, but of fellow-soldiers, who fight with us, though we catch no gleam of their flashing swords and hear no sound from the rushing of their chariots of fire. Ay, when

“the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together,” the angels are there in their midst, restraining them and rescuing from their devices the chosen of God; and when the tempter comes against our own hearts, and we struggle with his fearful power, there they are, the flower of heaven’s armies, standing by our side to strengthen and assist us. If Gabriel is insufficient, Michael shall come charged by the King to bear us up in his mighty hands, “lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone;” and if all the angels fail to rescue us, behold, the everlasting Arm shall sustain us; for the Lord is round about them that fear him, “a very present help in time of trouble.” Then, soldiers of Christ, take courage! Ye are fighting in an army which no man can number and no foe withstand—an army which shall be victorious though the battle be long and the enemy powerful, and for whom, beyond the strife, the turmoil, and the conflict, await the conqueror’s crown and the conqueror’s joy in the presence of the King of glory.

CHAPTER V.

THE FUNCTIONS OF ANGELS.

WITH the exception of that passage of Scripture which tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," there is none which so clearly sets forth the greatness and importance of man's salvation as the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Are they not ALL ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" It is the part of wisdom to employ in a work the most suitable agents for its accomplishment, and such as are necessary for its completion. A wise man will not employ a force vastly greater than is needed to accomplish the end in view; and if you know that a man is wise, you can judge of the magnitude of the work he has undertaken by the

force he employs. If the enemies of a great king, in some obscure province of his empire, had made prisoners and slaves of a handful of his subjects, and you saw him send forth to their rescue the mightiest of his warriors, the flower of his armies, the very guard of his palace, and, above all, his only son, the heir to his throne, would you not conclude that the enemy was very strong and the prisoners very dear to the king's heart?

When we see the preparations which God has made for the salvation of man, when, in addition to the sacrifice of his Son, he deems it best to use *all* his angels as ministering spirits, we gain some light on the great problem of the value of the human soul. For if man's redemption could have been purchased with any less noble price than the blood of Jesus, think you he would have died on Calvary? If God saw that part of the angelic host could have given the necessary aid and protection to the heirs of salvation, think you he would have sent *all*? Think of all that has been revealed to us concerning the strength,

holiness, and intelligence of the angels, think of their untiring, ceaseless labors and swift obedience, and then realize, if you can, the magnitude of the work in which God sees fit to employ such agents. How very dear these heirs of salvation must be to Jehovah's heart! Weak and despicable in their own eyes and in the eyes of their fellows, yet how God loves them! or rather how he loves the image of his Son shining in their hearts! For it is no excellence nor beauty in man himself on which the love of God is predicated, but the love he bears his Son, which makes every one who has named his name an object of such great interest to the Father. True, God loves the world; but those who are Christ's are specially dear to him. God and the angels so love Jesus that when he stamps his image upon a human heart there is joy in heaven; and to prevent the dimming of that image by sin or its pollution by vice, God sends his angels to guard and guide the soul which bears it; and they come, swiftly, willingly, gladly, to devote their labors to a creature originally

created lower than themselves and fallen far below his first estate.

It is this love for Christ and for Christians because they have been washed in his blood which prompts the ministering of the angels and makes nothing common or unclean which Christ has sanctified. You can form some faint idea of what it must be to the holy angels to be here in this sin-cursed earth, where all is deceitful and desperately wicked. You can judge somewhat of their love for God in that they feel no loathing as they go forth to be ministering spirits to worms of the dust. Thanks be to God, that was no empty boast of the apostle, but a glorious exhibition of God's exceeding grace, when he said, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come;" and if you would realize somewhat of the precious meaning of those words, go look on Elijah as he lies asleep under the juniper tree. A trembling fugitive, flying in cowardice from the threat of a woman, worn by his long flight, deserted of men, and even

despairing of God—witness his wild prayer for death—poor, friendless, desolate, travel-worn, he lies sleeping beneath the juniper tree which is his only shelter. As he lies unconscious there an angel stands by his side cooking the food which the weary prophet needs to sustain him. It may have been the very angel who had slain the first-born of Egypt, or who had rained fire upon the guilty cities of the plain, whose right arm could destroy the entire race of man, and now he stands patiently, cheerfully, lovingly, bending over the fire of coals that he may prepare food for a suffering man. As respects the difference between their power, strength, wisdom, and intellect, for the angel thus humbly to serve Elijah is as if God commanded Sir Isaac Newton to spend his life gathering dust for a worm.

What perfect humility among these mighty warriors of God! And what must be their thoughts when they see man proudly refusing to obey the commands of his Creator? Man's pride might have objected to such a degradation of his great powers to menial offices,

but to angelic eyes there is nothing low or high which God requires, but every command bears with it the dignity of the great King, and the love which God bore Elijah sanctified him, weak and erring though he was, and made him an object worthy the highest service of the archangel.

“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” asks the apostle; and all the course of biblical history answers the question. The very name *angels* is given them because they bear messages to men. For two thousand years they appeared often to men; and to have seen an angel was counted no very wonderful thing, and occasioned no incredulity. I have previously mentioned instances in which the angels came as ministers of God’s vengeance; let us now notice briefly the messages of love and errands of mercy with which they have from time to time been charged.

The angels destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, it is true, but they remained in the midst of that great wickedness an entire night

that they might rescue Lot and give his sons-in-law an opportunity to escape. Even when Lot and his family delayed their departure, the angels took them by the hand and led them to safety. An angel stayed the hand of Abraham ere he sacrificed Isaac; an angel revealed to Manoah the strength of Samson; an angel likewise confided to Gideon the rescue of Israel. In like manner, it was an angel who walked in the fiery furnace with the Hebrew children, and closed the mouths of the lions that Daniel might receive no hurt. In fact, Daniel seems to have been specially favored by the ministrations of angels. He was a man greatly beloved of God, and therefore specially cared for by angels, among whom Gabriel seems to have been his special friend and companion. You will remember how he comes to Daniel with, as it were, a courteous apology for his long delay. An angel announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias; of Jesus, to Mary and to the shepherds. Angels watched over the infant Messiah from the manger to the sepulchre;

and when he ascended on high amid their rejoicing legions, two remained behind to comfort the disciples. An angel directed the praying Cornelius to send for Peter; and when Peter himself lay bound between the soldiers, an angel loosed his chains, and reminded him, in loving solicitude for even his physical welfare, of the garment Peter had forgotten, and guided him through the opened gates of the city to life and safety. An angel directed Philip to go join himself with the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch, who, receiving and obeying the gospel, was permitted to go on his way rejoicing. An angel stood by the side of Paul and comforted him amid the terrors of shipwreck, promising that he should stand before Cæsar, and informing him that God had given him all his fellow-passengers.

Read over your Bible for yourselves, and see how constantly the angels appear as ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation; then thank God and take courage from the blessed assurance that they shall so minister to the end of time. Ours is indeed

a glorious Father who appoints such servants to watch over his children as they wander far from his face. And it is as true of heaven as of earth, of angels as of men, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." They guard God's children from danger, as when they protected Jacob from Esau's anger, and when the chariots of fire stood round the prophet to guard him from the Syrians. In the thirty-fourth Psalm David expressly says: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them;" and in the ninety-first Psalm: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

The fall of the angels and their being left without a Redeemer must ever be an insuperable objection to the theory of those who believe that God's design in the government of

the universe is to secure the greatest amount of happiness to his creatures consistent with their free moral agency. If his chief motive in creation was to secure the greatest amount of happiness, how can this choosing of man and rejection of the fallen angels be explained? Moreover, it shows the holiness of the angels that no envious or discontented feeling has arisen in their hearts because God left their comrades and brethren to the penalty of their misdeeds and sent Christ to die to redeem, and themselves to serve, those among the children of Adam who shall be the "heirs of salvation."

It may be that the angels rejoice in the distinction which God has made because only a portion of them fell, and many angels were still left to praise God and glorify his name; while had no redemption been provided for man, the entire race would have perished in the sin of Adam, and in all the heavenly host not one representative would have been found from that race so highly favored in Paradise.

In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew occurs this passage: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." A majority, I believe, of the commentators seem to think that by the "little ones" whom Christ here mentions we are to understand children in general, for he had just before placed a little child in the midst of his disciples. Others take the view, and I think correctly, that the Saviour refers to the little ones who believe in him—to "babes in Christ," as Paul styles them. But whether reference is had to all children or to feeble Christians, we still have no right to assume the correctness of the old Jewish notion that every one has a separate and distinct guardian angel whose sole duty it is to watch over him. For while it is evident that in some special sense the angels have charge of the "little ones," it by no means follows that the same single angel may not have the care of an entire church or community, or may not, along with his

duty of watchfulness, have also other employment. Gabriel not only had some special mission in reference to Daniel, but also had the duty of resisting the "prince of Persia."

It is a beautiful thought that the holy eyes of the angels watch the happy sports of childhood and guard the little ones as they go in fearless faith among dangers from which the old would shrink. You have read with bated breath of children sporting at a serpent's nest, or even playing with the poisonous reptile himself; and as you read did no thought of an angel's hand laid upon the serpent's fangs enter your mind? Did no thought of their loving care come to you as you commented on the miraculous escape of the little ones? And when darkness and slumber have hid them from the parent's loving eye, what sweet trustfulness in the thought that angels are watching them still, with eyes no sleep can dim, no weariness close, and no death darken, and that if, as the little ones say in that simple prayer, "they should die before they wake," angel hands would bear them gently away to

the good Shepherd whose tenderest care is for the lambs of his fold !

But if Jesus meant by the "little ones" his feeble disciples who, weak and despised, humble and poor, among men, have yet for guardians the mighty beings who stand in the immediate presence of Jehovah, it is still a glorious thought. Disciples whose trembling steps are watched by sleepless eyes, whose timid hands are clasped by mighty power, and whose feeble blows in the cause of right are backed by the warrior arms of heaven's mighty hosts—how different this from the condition of the soul ere Jesus hath redeemed it from the bondage of sin, when unclean spirits dwelt with it, and demons guided it down the broad way that leadeth to destruction ; when the angels passed by on rapid wing, pausing to pity, it may be, the bondsman of Satan, but lifting no earnest hands to remove his chains. But when the Spirit of God has enlightened the soul sitting in darkness, when over his sinfulness is flung the bright robe of Christ's righteousness, and the seal of

his love gleams upon the forehead, then the angels whom God appoints come and encamp around about him to guard him from falling. Then, when the evil spirit returns, he finds no ready house, "empty, swept, and garnished," but a temple where the Holy Ghost is abiding, and before whose portals stand the shining sentinels of the celestial army.

But to watch the footsteps of infancy, to guard the heart of manhood, to minister to the heirs of salvation, are not the only labors which God has given these servants of his to perform for his children. As we read the touching story of Lazarus dying among the pitying dogs at the rich man's gate, it seems as if here was one of his creatures to whom God had "forgotten to be gracious," from whom his mercy was "clean gone for ever." Looking with flesh-darkened eyes upon that scene, we see only the dying beggar and the strangely silent dogs; but had we such eyes as we shall have hereafter, we could see in mid-air, above the head of the suffering Lazarus, the radiant ones hovering. A beggar

of earth is dying, and only dogs stand round him ; but a child of God is there, and angels are waiting with loving care to bear his soul to the mansions of the blest. When the last breath has shaken his frail body, the freed soul steps gladly forth into the everlasting light and meets the shining messengers from his Father's house. To bear their souls to the mansions prepared for them is the last earthly ministry the angels give to the heirs of salvation. Let that thought comfort you who watch your loved ones go out beyond the grasp of your clinging hand, beyond the sound of your tenderest words. They go not alone into the darkness ; as you fade from their view the angels grow brighter ; as your farewell falls on the palsied ear a heavenly welcome greets them ; and as you bend in agony over an empty robe of clay radiant hands are guiding the spirit "clothed upon with immortality," to receive "the crown of glory which the righteous Judge shall give." What darkness is there in the tomb where such light is shining ? What danger in death when such war-

riors guard it? What victory for the grave when angels are waiting to bear the spirit home?

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” All the Bible answers Paul’s great question in a glorious affirmative. But there is for each reader a question which must be prayerfully answered in order to lay hold of the blessed promises implied in the text: *Am I an heir of salvation?* Let each reader answer. If you are, go fearlessly on your appointed way, grateful to God for all his blessings, among them the guardianship of his angels here and their companionship hereafter. If you are not, do none of these glorious proofs that God has given us of his love move you? Can you look on the tender ministering care of the angels and feel no desire to share in their devotion? Is the companionship of devils more desirable? Is a share in their chains and in the gulf of fire to be preferred to the glories of heaven? I beseech you by the mercies of God, by the love which sends

his palace-guard and his trusted warriors to be your servants—nay, which sent his only-begotten Son to be your surety—be ye reconciled to him. No matter how far into sin you may have gone; no matter if for years you have been a member of his church, feeling in your heart through it all that you are not an heir of salvation, but a stranger to God's grace; no matter how secretly or openly, vilely or respectably, you have sinned,—God's ear is open to your cry, his love is waiting to rescue you from sin, and his angels stand ready to guard you from the wiles of the adversary. I beg you now, ere you lay down this book, resolve that by the grace of God you will look with humble trust to Jesus and devote your life to the simple single object of pleasing your Saviour and glorifying "your Father who is in heaven."

CHAPTER VI.

ANGELS ARE SPECTATORS.

WHEN first the world was created, the Bible tells us, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." No doubt they had watched with eager interest the unfolding of the earth from chaos—the races of animals rising higher and higher as each successive convulsion swept away their predecessors, and the new word of creation brought others forth into being. And when at length the earth came to its full beauty ; when the carpet of green was thrown over its granite boulders, starred as it was with flowers and broken by the sheen of crystal streams ; when God placed in the heavens above a tabernacle for the sun, hung round with purple and scarlet and gold, while only the beasts of the forests roved through the beauties of earth, with no thought for the

gorgeous sky above them, no care for the bright-eyed flowers, no love for the soft beauty of the grass which was their daily food,—it may be the angels wondered for what great purpose this new planet, with all its loveliness, was created.

But when God caught from earth a handful of its dust and stamped upon it his own image, when he breathed into its nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul, capable of enjoying the countless beauties of his new home, and of praising the goodness of a God whose power had created the world and himself, then indeed “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” But the great design of this creation was still a mystery, as the apostle tells us, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, and was clearly revealed only when the legions of angels welcomed back to his place the ascending Redeemer—nay, which is not even yet fully revealed; for as they watch the pathway along which God is leading his church, the principalities

and powers see ever more and more distinctly the manifold wisdom of God.

When they tuned their harps to sing of the earth's creation, they could only praise the power and greatness of Jehovah—that power which they had so long glorified, exhibited as it had been in the forming of worlds to which this new earth was insignificant, power which they had seen with a deeper awe when rebellious angels woke the hidden justice of God, and brought upon themselves the vengeance of Omnipotence.

That Jehovah loved these new creatures whom he had made from the dust the angels knew from the kindness which had made their paradise a marvel of beauty, from his condescension in walking with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening, and from the messages of love which themselves had borne ever and anon to the inhabitants of Eden. For we can well believe that the green sward of that garden was often pressed by angelic feet, and the gleam of their wings often shone among its bowers, as they lingered by Adam's

side and spoke of the glory and greatness of God, telling him in the shades of the evening of the distant worlds which seemed as sparks of fire in the heavens—telling him the marvels of the sun as they sat beneath its noon-tide splendor—telling him oftener still of the resplendent glories of their own dwelling-place, where even then their brothers were standing in bright ranks around the great white throne of God. Do you wonder that as she listened to all this the desire grew daily stronger in Eve's heart to be as these angels in their wondrous power and knowledge? And do you wonder that when the tempter came his wisdom perceived that the most powerful inducement he could bring to bear upon her was that promise, "Ye shall be as the gods, knowing good and evil"?

There came a day, alas! when, like the apostate angels, this new race fell; when all the love the holy angels bore them was changed into detestation of their sin. Adam and Eve believed Satan rather than God even when the tempter charged falsehood on the Al-

mighty. God gave one little command in order to test their obedience to him; and they failed in that, partaking of the fruit which he had forbidden.

We can imagine the burning indignation of the angels who witnessed this fall; and how they winged their swift way to heaven and proclaimed among the glittering hosts the apostasy of earth. Well might Adam endeavor to hide himself beneath the trees in the garden, for at that moment he had not a friend in all the creation of God. The very beasts he had lately named and governed glared on him with angry eyes; the devils were holding high carnival over his fall and planning new ways to show their malignity and hatred against him; while in heaven, down all the ranks of angels, could be seen only horror at such wickedness and a burning zeal to vindicate God's justice by the swift punishment of this new race upon earth. For the angels are very jealous of God's name, which Satan had insulted; very zealous for God's glory, the one great object of their thoughts.

From the archangel to the gnat in the air, not a creature in all the universe was a friend to that man and woman cowering beneath the trees of Eden. Man had not one solitary created friend in heaven, earth, or hell. But—blessed be the mercy of God!—man found a friend in this his hour of sorest need. When the beasts he had fondled turned with claw and fang upon him; when the devil whom he had obeyed was plotting still to destroy him; when the holy angels turned in loathing from his pollution, in swift anger from his guilt,—then the One whom he had disobeyed yearned over him with a father's forgiving affection, and the Majesty whose name he had insulted and whose authority he had disavowed had mercy upon him. He found love where the devils found only justice—a Saviour where they found a King. God made use of the sword of eager cherubim, not to blot the guilty race from the face of the earth, but to guard the garden of Eden and the way of the tree of life. And man went forth to a world cursed for his sake to struggle for life with

thorns and thistles, among wild beasts, now savage and fierce, under sentence of death for his sin, yet bearing with him through it all the blessed promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

The principalities and powers in heavenly places followed the footsteps of Adam and Eve with eyes anxious to look into this mystery and learn all that was contained in that great promise. But to them, as to us, the knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God was unfolded gradually in the history of the world's redemption. The angels required no vindication of God's wisdom and power; yet he will, in his own good time, vindicate that wisdom against the charge of having made a creature too feeble to withstand the wiles of the devil and leaving him seemingly defenceless. And he will vindicate his power against the charge of inability to make and preserve a creature to glorify him if Satan choose to interfere with his plan.

When Cain's murderous hand released his brother's spirit, and the first body of human

being returned to the dust from which it came, it may be that the angels looked in each other's faces in surprise as the earth-born Abel took his place among them in heaven. The angels who had sinned lay still in chains awaiting the judgment of the last great day, and not one from all their number had returned to take again his place among the heavenly hosts. Yet this fallen man comes welcomed as a son by Jehovah. We can well believe the angels hushed their songs for a moment as Abel begins his praise to God to listen eagerly to his words; and the wonder deepens in their hearts as they hear his adoration to his Redeemer. They sing of God's glory and wisdom and might, but here is one who chants God's mercy; they praise him as King of kings, their Creator and Preserver, but Abel's harp has yet a sweeter strain as he sings of his Redeemer and Saviour.

As Abel stands there fearless in the white light which beams down upon him from the throne, spotless in his purity, as they see with astonishment, the question may well arise in

their hearts, "How can God be just and the justifier of him that sinneth?" How? Not that they for a moment question the possibility or the fact, but they long to look into the mystery. Yet as Abel stood among them they saw in his salvation, mercy, that bright emanation of divinity which shone nowhere else in all the universe; they saw also forgiveness, long-suffering, and love, and saw them for the first time in all the ages during which they had adored the divine perfections. Down yonder on the bars of that fearful prison-house is written in flaming letters, "God is justice;" on all the far-reaching orbs of his universe, out to the farthest realms of space, as they flit by on swift wing, the angels can read in letters of light, "God is power;" and here in their own dwelling-place, here where Jehovah's presence burns and brightens, they need no letters, for they bear graven on their loving hearts, "God is goodness." But is he mercy? Is he patience? Is he long-suffering? Hell answers from her gloomy caverns, "There is no mercy here; the justice of the Judge, the

power of Omnipotence, the swift vengeance of a great King and his glory through it all, these I know full well ; but of mercy and tender compassion, nothing." The distant suns careering on through space answered, "We sing of power, of majesty, and of glory ; but we have heard nothing of mercy and forgiving love." And from the corridors of heaven, in the anthems of the cherubim, you catch the sound of power and goodness, of might and majesty ; but of mercy, pity, and forgiveness to the erring, Gabriel can tell us nothing ; and the empty throne of Lucifer stands as a great warning to all creatures of "the goodness and severity of God." Ay, and blot the earth from the universe, the elect from heaven, and there is naught left to tell the angels of God's mercy which "endureth for ever."

Men wonder oftentimes why in his sovereign power God should have allowed evil to enter this world. Once banish from your minds the idea that man is the most important thing in the universe, and God's glory a very insignificant thing in comparison to him, and then

you can see sufficient reason for man's fall in the development of God's mercy and love before the adoring gaze of the angels. It was as if, even in heaven itself, the seraphim had ever seen God "through a glass darkly," till Abel stood among them, and they veiled their faces before the exceeding brightness which broke over them as they caught glimpses of that mercy which was so wonderful an attribute of Jehovah, and of that love which is his very heart of hearts. And if God so loved that poor, fallen, feeble race yonder upon earth as to pardon them, though upon what terms the angels knew not, then, loving what God loves, they give up their enmity to the guilty and polluted race, and welcome Abel to the glories of heaven in a strain of rapture such as in all the ages of the past has never sounded adown the gleaming corridors.

We seldom think of the love of the angels as one of the blessings purchased for us by the blood of Jesus, as one of the "good gifts" which he brought to man when, rising from the dead, he "led captivity captive." Yet it

undoubtedly is. If Christ had left us to perish in our sins, the angels would have felt toward us only holy horror at our guilt and indignation at our rebellion, very much as would be felt by the chosen warriors of a king toward a band of his subjects who had broken his laws, reviled his name, and deserted to the standard of his foes. They would have borne for us no more love than they feel to-day for the devils who fell. How could they? What fellowship hath light with darkness? But when in our extremity God loved us, when, despite the filthy rags of our shame, his hand was extended to us, then angelic hearts were warmed toward us, and they saw in the fallen race no longer defiant sinners worthy to share with the devil and his angels the prison-house of despair, but wandering sons whom they delight to lead back to their Father's mansion.

Over all the blackness of our moral depravity shines the brightness of God's mercy, and in its light we stand before the angels hallowed and glorified. Ay, when in all the

universe, from highest heaven to deepest hell, every voice was raised against guilty man, when Justice drew out her sword, scarcely sheathed from the punishment of Lucifer, and every voice cried, "Strike! destroy the creature who, so blessed by his God, has disbelieved that God's word; who, made of the very dust, has risen in rebellion and said to the Almighty, 'Satan is higher than thou!'"—then, from the right hand of the Father, Jesus stood forth, saying, in his fathomless love for the guilty race, "Stay! I will take man's punishment, I offer myself as his surety; lay his iniquity upon me, and with my stripes let man be healed!" From that day to this the archangel has given his mighty intellect to the comprehension of the love that then spoke to save man from death; and it is still to him a mystery over which all the cycles of eternity will ever find him bending with constantly increasing awe and adoration.

When there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, Jesus stood in our behalf, and won back to our guilty race the pitying tenderness

of the angels. Ay, and he shall yet restore the affection of the beasts which Adam lost in Eden ; for in the glad light of the millennial day "the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them."

I have taken a great leap in the gradual development of the manifold wisdom of God before the principalities and powers in heavenly places ; but I could not help it. From the death of Abel to the cross of Christ was a period of forty centuries, during which the angels were spelling out the great plan of salvation by the scattered alphabet of prophecy and types and shadows ; but I could not stop to spell it out with them, as I had meant to do ; I could listen no longer even to the songs of the angels to God's glory and majesty ; for over all their voices I wanted to hear that chorus of the redeemed, "Jesus ! Jesus ! Jesus !" and to listen to the triumphant challenge of the apostle, "Who is he that condemneth ?" Ay, "who is he that condemneth ?"

Time was when from highest to lowest the

word went forth to Justice, "Strike! for man is guilty!" But now, standing by the side of our Surety, wearing the robe of his righteousness, feeling the grasp of his hand, while the shadow of his cross falls over us, we can look unflinchingly into the faces of all God's creatures, and ask, "Who is he that condemneth?" On the very steps of the throne, by the very side of Justice, whose hand holds the sword of vengeance, we can cry exultingly, "Who is he that condemneth?" The angels shall look upon the cross and stand silent; Moses shall step forward a moment, but return to his place as he catches the gleam of our blood-washed robes; Justice shall look upon the price of our redemption paid unto her hand, and find all paid to the uttermost farthing; and amid the silence of all who might have risen up against us shall sound the loving voice of the Saviour to whose hand we cling, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "From the foundation of the world," from the day

when Adam sinned, there was in all the universe only one eye to pity and only one arm to save. When man's wilful transgression severed the golden chain of obedience which bound earth to heaven, and our world swung off into the darkness of eternal night, Jesus sprang forward ere it was too late, and throwing the glittering cord of love and mercy around the wandering planet fastened it securely to the very throne of God.

Thinking of all this, we begin to catch some faint glimpse of the apostle's meaning when he speaks of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; and we can ask, with the awe-struck Psalmist, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." Crowned with glory and honor! Guilty and fallen, totally depraved and desperately wicked, sold willing slaves under the basest of masters, yet Jesus, for no comeliness or beauty in our polluted souls, but from his own great love

and tender compassion, chose us as the ones in whom to show forth to principalities and powers in heavenly places "the manifold wisdom of God." And *we*, once the slaves of sin, led captive by Satan at his will, are permitted to sit among the angels "crowned with glory and honor." Oh, that wondrous love of Jesus which passeth knowledge! If for one moment we allow our souls to lose the memory of that love which hath redeemed us, and follow the multitude to do evil, if, forgetting the eye that pitied and the arm that saved us, we should stray into forbidden paths, and kneel, in robes which his blood hath cleansed, before the altar of Mammon or of Belial, should we not justly merit the severest condemnation of our gracious Lord?

If, while the mighty angels look upon the wondrous scene, Jesus stands pleading with the sinner, and the guilty one should say—not in words, it may be, but in actions, to which the loudest words are silence—"I do not wish your love; I prefer the service of Satan; the gifts which he offers are better

than yours ; his yoke is easier and his burden lighter ;"—if by continuing in sin after having heard of this wondrous love of Jesus, he should thus answer his pleadings; how can he expect to escape the wrath of God? Does he intend to repent at some day in the distant future? Does he think the Almighty has no care for his glory? Is there no warning for such in the words, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me"? By the terrors of the law, by the fierceness of God's wrath, by the horrors of the second death—nay, by the love of Jesus for their soul when no eye pitied and no arm was stretched forth to save—we may well "beseech such in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." If they hearken and accept the offers of mercy, then to the principalities and powers in heavenly places will be shown forth in them, not the fearfulness of Jehovah's wrath and the might of his vengeance, but the power of his wondrous mercy and the strength of his redeeming love.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FALL OF THE ANGELS.

THE first and most important questions for a soldier brought on the field of battle are, "Where are the forces of the enemy? Where will they probably attack? How must they be resisted?" Why they are hostile, what was the cause of the warfare, and how long will be its duration, are points well enough, perhaps, for the king to understand, and which he may or may not communicate to his army, as he sees best. No true soldier will refuse to fight because he has not had time to sit down in his tent, and to become fully instructed as to the merits of the original dispute which brought on the war. Nay, if he be at all a modest man, he will feel that there may be diplomatic complications which he could not understand; and it behooves him, as a faithful subject, to simply obey the

commands of his king to fight those he is ordered to attack, and to give his entire strength to that warfare.

Thus the inspired writers seem to have judged the temper of the Christian soldier. They generally speak of the spiritual enemies that surround us, in brief, stirring appeals to be on guard against their strategy. Truly, it concerns us little to know why Satan first revolted from his allegiance, but it concerns us very much to understand how and where he will attack us, and with what weapons we may best defend ourselves. When the battle is over, and we enter as conquerors into the rest prepared for us, we may then, perhaps, investigate the origin of evil and the causes of the fall of Satan ; at present it behooves us to spend but little time over such questions, but to go forward in the battle till the victory is won.

Incidentally, however, from remarks thrown in for illustration or argument, we learn something of the early history of our enemies. We are taught by Peter and Jude that the

angels had a first estate—it may have been a state of probation like ours, though upon that point Scripture is silent—but while occupying that position some of the angels fell, and were driven forth into darkness by the justice of God. How large a portion of heaven's inhabitants were involved in this apostasy we know not, nor at what period before the beginning of time this revolt took place. The theory that it was when man was created and Satan's pride was wounded at the honor bestowed upon the earth-born is entirely conjectural. And Milton's view must be regarded as utterly false. An Arian might believe that Satan's revolt was occasioned by a new decree issued from the Father requiring worship to be given to the Son, but such a view cannot be accepted by those who believe that "the Word was God," equal with the Father through all eternity, and receiving the same worship from the heavenly host.

There was a time when Satan stood before his God pure and holy as Gabriel; in all the universe there was no evil; all was bright,

sinless, and holy ; perfect obedience, flowing from love to God, was the one rule of all lives. How, then, did sin originate? There was no serpent to tempt Lucifer. How, then, without external influence, could evil arise in a perfectly holy being? In vain do we ask such questions of the Scriptures ; upon them they are silent, and wisely so. This is a point which does not concern us practically, and may be so far beyond our comprehension that no words could make the matter plain to us. We do not know how sin enters our own hearts ; we are far from understanding human nature, despite all the experience of its workings which life gives us. What possible advantage, then, to man in an explanation of the origin of evil? Why God should have permitted its entrance, having omnipotent power, is another question easily answered : Such was his pleasure. He doeth his will among the armies of heaven as well as among the inhabitants of the earth. That will is the final cause of all things ; there is nothing back of it, no reason is needed save God's pleasure.

If you cannot see how the pleasure of a holy God can be consistent with the introduction of evil, I answer that you are not expected nor required to see it. It is neither your duty nor privilege to comprehend Jehovah; only a being also infinite could possibly do that. That God is holy is a truth you are required to believe; that he did allow sin to enter the universe is another thing which you are required to believe; but to see how these two things can be reconciled, is no part of your duty. It seems that the worst form the deadly sin of pride ever takes, is when it attempts by searching to find out God. An intellect so limited as to be unable thoroughly to comprehend the mote in the sunbeam, the leaf upon the tree, or the pebble by the brookside arraigns before its tribunal the moral government of Jehovah.

Instead of spending our energy in debating when and how and why these angels fell, let us learn the great lessons which their fall should teach us. If God spared not the angels who stood round the throne, the first-

born sons of creation, the Reubens of the family, will he spare any guilty one whose sin remaineth unatoned for? If justice began at God's throne, shall it fail on his footstool? Here is the great lesson which both Peter and Jude would impress upon our minds—the inflexible purity and justice of God, that he will not allow sin in any creature to go unpunished, and without holiness no man nor angel shall see the Lord.

It is especially to professing Christians that the warning is given. There was danger that they would feel secure from temptation, and by that very feeling be exposed to the wiles of Satan. They were in danger of forgetting the injunction, "Be not high-minded, but fear;" and in adoring God as their Father, there was danger of attributing to him human weakness and partiality, as though he would wink at the faults of his children. To guard against such a misapprehension of God's character, the apostles take us back into the ages of eternity, and drawing aside the veil which conceals the spiritual world show us the sword

of justice drawn forth against the brightest of the sons of the morning—show us legions of angels driven forth for ever from the face of infinite Holiness. And looking in awe upon the fallen sons of God as hopeless and helpless they go forth into darkness, the apostles turn, with earnest tones asking, “Think you, if God spared not his angels, he will spare sinful man? Think you that profession of faith in Jesus will deceive the All-seeing if you continue in sin? Though you stand high in the church and are influential among your brethren and courted by the world, think you the justice which reached Lucifer in heaven will fail to reach you?”

Look again upon the scene which the apostles disclose, and adore the wondrous mercy of God to our race. The fallen angels are gone; their places in heaven know them no more; thousands of years have passed since their thrones were left vacant and their harps unstrung, yet not one of all their number has resumed his station or mingled his voice in the song of the seraphim, but round the throne

of God, in the midst of the holy angels, gleam many faces which shone not there when Lucifer disappeared from his place, and voices weaker but no less clear sing there a song—sweeter than that which the morning stars sang together over the cradle of creation—to him who hath redeemed them with his blood and made them kings and priests unto God for ever. Oh, look upon those vacant angel-thrones and upon the shining faces of the redeemed, and fathom if you can those glorious words, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

There were some elements in man's fall lacking in the case of the angels, which fact made, not a claim, but a stronger appeal, to God's mercy. Lucifer had no tempter, the guilt was his and his only, while against the holiness of Eve was brought the full force of an intellect far greater than her own—an intellect knowing good and evil, knowing the weak points in human character and what at-

tack would most probably be successful. And then every angel sinned for himself; he inherited no evil tendencies, suffered not the consequences of the sins of his fathers, but standing in heaven, perfectly holy, chose death rather than life and sin rather than purity. The case of the human race would have been parallel had every one of earth's inhabitants till the end of time stood round that forbidden tree and chosen to obey Satan rather than God. As it is, we come into this world with natures already depraved in consequence of a transgression for which we were in no wise responsible, committed at the dawn of history by our great progenitor.

Again, the angels sinned against more light than we; all their additional knowledge and the superiority of their intelligence added to the guilt of their sin. Seeing God face to face, they knew his purity, his goodness, his truth, as man, whose spiritual eyes are covered with the clay from which he is made, cannot know them. It is faith which is the instrument of salvation; where all is knowledge,

what room is there for faith ? If man understood the mysteries connected with God's government as we may suppose the devils to understand them, if we realized what we do when we sin, as Satan realizes it, there might be nothing left for us but a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." The dying prayer of Jesus was, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" but Lucifer knew, and his angels knew; there is for them, therefore, no intercessor, and for their guilt no atonement. Let us be thankful that to us faith has been given instead of knowledge, for to the fallen the fruit upon the tree of knowledge is evermore *death*. But though these and many other things made our guilt less than that of the angels, they did not establish any claim for us upon God's mercy; whatever the punishment of fallen angels might be, *we* deserved eternal banishment from his presence. And we owe the plan of salvation, by which God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth, to no extenuating circumstances

connected with our transgression, but to "the great love wherewith he hath loved us."

Ah! men talk of the great mystery that God permitted the introduction of evil, and it is a great mystery; but far more incomprehensible is that love which redeemed so weak and wicked a race as ours—love which passed by the fallen angels to lift man from the dust and to crown him with glory and honor. We did not deserve it—nay, we did not deserve the least of God's mercies, infinitely less the blood of his Son. Our world is one of the smallest of the myriads which man can discover in the heavens; were it destroyed to-day, its absence would not be perceived by any save the nearest planets; yet to rescue its inhabitants from their own vices, from the consequences of evil actions which they wilfully incurred, the Lord whom all the starry hosts adore suffered the shameful death of the cross. It may be that our minds will at some future time comprehend the introduction of evil; but Michael himself through all eternity can never fathom the depths of

that love wherewith "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The angels knew the holiness of God, knew his claims upon their obedience, and therefore understood the guilt they took upon themselves by revolting; but they did not know the punishment which would follow as a consequence. Wicked as they are, they are not foolish; though enemies to God, they did not desire to destroy themselves. They had seen God's power as Creator in the forming of the worlds, but of his power to punish they knew nothing. They had seen his goodness as displayed in the blissful home he had prepared for them in heaven, but of his justice they were ignorant; of his horror of sin, of his omnipotence, against which all created things were utterly powerless, they knew nothing. It may be they expected to prevail against God so far as to be able to make terms with him as independent sovereigns rather than as subjects of his government. No revelation

had been made to them of the horrors of hell and the terrors of eternal death. That they are capable of a true repentance I do not believe, for that involves a hatred of sin and a love of holiness, not merely a desire for happiness. But if to-day they could be put back where they stood in the ages past, and the choice was again given them of obedience or disobedience, with their present knowledge of the terrible results of transgression, I do not believe one of them would revolt.

They are wicked, but not foolish. Man stands alone in his folly ; and though warned by revelation of the terrors of that pit whence "the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever," he yet chooses death rather than life, and goes of his own free will into the fire prepared, not for him, but for the devil and his angels, rather than into the mansions of glory which a Father's love hath prepared for all who will go to Jesus. Sympathize as they may with our vileness, surely human folly would seem to be as incomprehensible to the devils as their fall from holiness is to us.

In all our thoughts of the demons, we seldom dwell on their great suffering and ceaseless anguish. We look upon them as our tormentors, exulting in the woes they inflict, rather than as being themselves tortured. Allowed to roam the earth for a season, it may be that their punishment is not what it will be when the world's history is ended and they are confined in the blackness of darkness, yet their misery is none the less real; they are the most wretched, as they are the vilest, of creation. They have not even the wicked man's privilege of forgetfulness; they have no fleshly senses in which to drown remorse, and no sleep to bring relief for a time. They have no self-deception, which often enables a man to hush the voice of conscience by persuading himself that his guilt is a little thing; nor have they that faint hope which lingers in the breast of the most hardened human wretches, that, in some way and at some time, there will be found atonement and mercy for them. They have neither ignorance, forgetfulness, nor hope; how can they be otherwise

than miserable? That utterance of the poet has been questioned,

“A sorrow’s crown of sorrow
Is remembering happier things.”

With human woes it is, in a certain sense, false; there is a melancholy pleasure in recalling to our minds the joys of the past; like the rays of the setting sun, they gild the coming shadows of the night, but it is only because, like those rays, they tell of a morning beyond the darkness. The recollection is sadly sweet, because it shows that our sorrow had a beginning and whispers that it will soon have an end. But when there shall be no morrow, when we know that happier things are ended for ever and Despair’s black banner shuts out sight of Hope’s white wing, then is not thought of buried joy the very crown of sorrow?

Through all the ages which have come and gone since the angels fell from their purity, they have never forgotten what life was to them when they stood fearless and happy be-

fore God's face and went in gladness forth at his bidding. The recollection fills them with envy, malice, and impotent rage at their old comrades who lost not their estate in heaven. Think you it does not bring to them awful misery and measureless pain as well? Is there no sting of undying worm in the thought that they too could have been blessed and glorious for ever had they chosen as Michael chose? Because it is remorse, and not repentance, a desire for happiness, and not for holiness, which influences them, only makes their grief the more terrible. And as we think of all their deep, endless, and hopeless misery it seems that, with all his indignation and wrath at their rebellion against God, Michael must feel some degree of pity in his heart, even while he contends with Satan most fiercely, as he thinks of those long-past scenes when he rejoiced to have Lucifer for a companion as they swept on tireless wings together through the universe, eager to accomplish the bidding of Jehovah, and talking as they went of the glories of the Almighty, or else standing side

by side before the throne veiling their faces in the divine presence as they said softly to each other, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

The demons have their thoughts, their desires, and their ambitions as well as men ; and they see continually their plans thwarted, their chosen way hedged in, by the fiat of Omnipotence, "Thus far, and no farther." They are proud ; is it no misery to be detested where they once were loved, shunned by those who once delighted in their converse ? They are ambitious ; is it no pain to realize how low they have fallen, and to know that they must sink lower and lower through all eternity ? Their ambition made them dissatisfied with thrones in heaven ; they grasped at supreme power ; and instead of God's sceptre in heaven, they received fetters in hell. They hate God with all the energy of their nature, and fight against his sovereignty with all their strength ; is it no misery to perceive that their most strenuous efforts against him but carry out his plans, and that, fight against it as they will,

they are working out his purposes as truly as do the obedient angels who delight in his service? Do you suppose Satan felt no wrath when he saw the increased prosperity and greater holiness of Job, nor writhed when the thorn he placed in Paul's flesh proved the means of preserving the apostle from sin, while he found that in his malice he had simply been the means in God's hands of benefiting the righteous men he sought to destroy? To hate a being supremely, and yet to be only an instrument in his hands for the advancement of his glory and purposes, to be used when he chooses, restrained when such is his pleasure, and through it all utterly powerless to injure him—the feeling of hatred thus thwarted would of itself make a hell of the heart which indulged it.

The demons are filled with envy toward God's people; their bitterest hatred is exercised against them, for they were left without mercy, while men were redeemed; and I suppose they have very much the same feeling which the son of a king might have if he were

banished from his father's house and severely punished for disobedience, while a beggar from the streets, vastly his inferior in natural endowments, and guilty as well of disobedience, should be forgiven and received into the palace from which himself is for ever excluded. The very contempt the devils feel for our folly and weakness must intensify their rage as they see heaven opened for a ransomed sinner, and hear the welcome of the Judge and the rejoicing of the angels. From the day that Eve sinned until this hour the demons have been ceaselessly and mightily at work against the elect of God ; if they cannot accomplish their destruction, they still endeavor to injure them by all the means in their power. They cannot make Christians bury the talent which God has given them, but they bring the whole power of hell to bear to cause the man with ten talents to gain but five, and the man with five to gain but two, so that their reward hereafter may be proportionately smaller, and the number of cities they shall rule proportionately less. If they cannot pluck out a branch

from the true Vine, they exert all their powers to make it unfruitful. If they cannot remove God's grace from the soul, they will prevent all the growth in grace they can ; and how great their power is, let the repeated warnings of the apostle tell you. For the devils believe God's words, though Christians doubt ; they remember, though we forget them. They know the great truth we are too apt to neglect—that though good works have nothing to do with securing justification, which is due solely to Christ's merits, they are nevertheless the measure of reward. There is no equality in heaven ; that soul which bore thirty fold shall receive a thirty fold reward, those that bore sixty and one hundred fold shall receive in the same proportion ; for every man shall be rewarded "*according to the deeds done in the body.*" Satan would not consider that day wasted in which he had prevented a Christian from giving a cup of cold water "in the name of a disciple," that he might lose his reward. Do not give place to the devil ; do with your might what your hands find to do ; heed no

suggestion of indolence or indifference; let nothing blind you to God's work which lies awaiting your labor; and by his grace you shall enter into life, not maimed nor halt through the machinations of your tireless adversary, but complete in him, perfect in the stature of manhood as it is in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WORK OF EVIL ANGELS.—DEMONIACS.— SPIRITUALISM.

THE apostle Paul says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." Eph. vi. 12.

It is evident that Paul regarded the spiritual foes against whom we must contend as no insignificant enemy easily subdued, as no abstract principle personified by man's fancy, and as no bugbear to frighten the timid and childish, but as foes very dangerous and very powerful, against whom strong men needed the strength of the Lord, and trained soldiers all the armor of God. There is no device more common in earthly war or in spiritual combat than to endeavor to allay the watchfulness of the soldier by leading him to under-rate the power and activity of the enemy and

his liability to attack. If we fall into this snare of Satan, it will not be for want of repeated warning from the apostles; and there is scarcely an Epistle in which our danger from spiritual foes is not mentioned to incite us to watchfulness.

What are these principalities and powers against which we wrestle? They are the angels which kept not their first estate and were delivered into chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment at the last day. How great their power in the earth since the day Adam cast off his allegiance to God and chose Satan for prince of this world, we can find no words to tell, though we catch fearful glimpses all along, from the scene in Eden till the great day when a new heaven and a new earth shall know the prince of the power of the air no more for ever. These are angels whose holiness has become vileness; whose love has become hatred; who delight no more in doing good, but in doing evil, not in assisting man, but in ruining him. All their desires have been changed by the fell power of sin over their

moral natures, but we have no reason to suppose that their appearance or their intellectual powers were materially modified by the fall. We have no intimation of such a change in Adam as he went forth from Eden, and we know that conversion or lapse into wickedness do not seem to affect the powers of the mind, but only the disposition of the heart. And if our eyes were opened to-day to see Gabriel and Lucifer standing in our very presence, it is possible we could distinguish no difference between them, for we know Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. It is probable that only a sinless being could distinguish the steady radiance of heavenly light in the eye of Gabriel from the sparkling of hellish flame in that of Lucifer.

Devils are no more like the black imps and hobgoblins of the painters than are God's strong angels like the slim-waisted girls and bodiless babies by which they are represented. Whatever strength belonged to Lucifer belongs now to Satan; whatever power holy angels can put forth, such also is in the hands

of demons when God permits its exercise. One angel destroyed every first-born in Egypt in a single might, another made havoc with the hosts of Sennacherib, and a third slew seventy thousand when David numbered the people. We have no reason to doubt that demons could do as much were the permission granted them. The physical phenomena which accompanied the giving of the law from Sinai we are told was by the ministration of angels; and in like manner we see the devil wielding the wind and the lightning in his attack upon Job's property and children. Again, we see Satan carrying the body of Christ through the air from the wilderness to "the pinnacle of the temple," and again "to the top of an exceeding high mountain."

. How great command a spirit who understands the laws of nature may have over those laws, we do not know, but certainly it is often very great. The plainest illustration of this power on the part of Satan is given in the account of the magicians of Egypt. I know that many ingenious efforts have been

made to explain away the miracles which they wrought, but it is always best to take the Bible accounts of events just as a child or a wayfaring man would take them, without any effort to explain them away. The Holy Spirit understood human language, and he was dictating a book for the humble and unlearned ; and it is just in the matter of humility that we often fail. We cannot see why God should have so ordered events ; and as to see the reason is for us the one thing needful, we proceed to search for some explanation differing from the plain meaning of Scripture. The record tells us that the magicians' rods became serpents, in the same plain, straightforward language in which it says that Aaron's rod became one. Now, we can deny the whole account if we choose on the ground that the Bible is not inspired, or we can insist that it was all legerdemain and optical illusion ; but there is not one single sound principle of interpretation or of common sense by which we can declare that Aaron's rod became a serpent and the others did not.

If you ask me why God allowed Satan to turn the rods into serpents, I cannot tell you ; nor do I know whether Satan has always had such power over matter. It may be that it was intended as a trial of faith to Moses and Aaron, designed to test whether they would believe in the power of their God when these Egyptian magicians could perform with their enchantments the very things which he had ordered them to do as a proof of their commission. It may be the intention was to harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he would refuse to let the people go, and that God's arm might be laid bare in their behalf. These may or may not be the reasons ; but it is not our business to give reasons : it is rather for us to accept the facts recorded and learn from them what lessons we can. We see in these and other instances that Satan has a marvelous power—a power which seems to us in our present knowledge to be miraculous, though it may only be such as any of us could have possessed had we been present at creation, and had studied, without hindrance from our clay bodies, the

laws of nature for six thousand years or longer. The Bible gives us other proofs that Satan has this wonderful power and can impart it to his servants. Jesus told his disciples (Matt. xxiv. 24), "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders: insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Again, Paul speaks (2 Thess. ii. 9) of the wicked one who shall be revealed, "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." The two-horned lamb seen in the Apocalypse "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." And John also saw three unclean spirits which, he tells us, were the spirits of devils *working miracles*. Well may Paul warn us that we wrestle against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places when such power is theirs.

Inconceivably rapid motion is most probably in the power of demons, transporting themselves from place to place as quick as

thought. They had at the beginning intellect superior to man's at its highest development. How long they remained in heaven, or how long after their fall till the creation of man, we do not know, but for six thousand years at least they have been roaming to and fro upon the earth. They can penetrate matter and watch the operation of forces far beneath the surface; they can move more rapidly than light; they have been clogged by no sickness nor weariness nor necessity for sleep during all these ages. Think what a man could have learned in all these centuries with such advantages, and then estimate, if you can, the wonderful knowledge which the devils bring to bear against us. They know, though often we do not, the sin that "doth so easily beset us;" and they bring to bear the very temptation to which we will most readily yield. They know at what time the shield of faith is lowered so that the fiery darts can strike our exposed hearts. Not for one moment can we lay aside our shield or sheathe the sword of the Spirit without peril from the princi-

palities and powers against which we wrestle. Other wild beasts retire to their lairs, but Satan goes constantly to and fro seeking whom he may devour.

Shutting our eyes to the power and activity of our enemies makes them none the less dangerous; refusing to think of their efforts to conquer us does not aid in subduing them. It will do for the ostrich—silliest of birds—to hide her head and imagine, because she cannot see the enemy, that she is safe from danger, but such conduct is hardly becoming in a rational creature. Yet it would seem as if many Christians had taken the ostrich as their model for imitation, for you will hear from pulpit and press, in prayer and exhortation, very little of that great adversary against whom our Bible warns us so repeatedly. It would seem as though they feared no foe save the corruption of their own natures; but much as we need to contend against the flesh, that is not all. Let us not forget that Adam fell and Christ was attacked by no inherent corruption, but by an outside enemy; and oftentimes

the flesh itself is dangerous chiefly as an ally of the devil.

We are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," for that will give power to the traitor within us; but we are also to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one" (*ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ*), which means, not from the danger against which the preceding petition was directed, but from the wiles of Satan—words which we repeat mechanically, with no thought of our adversary, much less with that ardent desire to be delivered which is an essential element of true prayer.

In what way is demoniacal power exerted over us? In every way. There is not a corner of our depraved being that is not subject to Satan's sway. He has power over our physical natures. He may be the cause of our diseases—indirectly, as when he leads us to disobey the laws of health; and directly, as when he covered Job with loathsome boils (Job ii. 7) and bound a daughter of Abraham (Luke xiii. 16) so that she could not lift up herself for eighteen years. This power of

producing diseases is distinct from that fearful one of possession; for though Job was the victim of disease, no one could say of him, "He hath a devil." There is something fearful in the thought of demoniacs, and we need not wonder that men have attempted to explain them away or assert that they only existed at the time of the Saviour. It has been declared that those who are said to be possessed of devils were in reality insane, or else were troubled with epileptic fits. These demoniacs not only possessed superhuman strength, which might be due to a diseased nature, but they also had superhuman knowledge. How could persons simply insane speak so generally to Jesus, "I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God"? How could they know that the time in which they spoke was before the time appointed for their tormenting? Jesus again and again spoke to the devils as separate personalities. A legion of insanities could scarcely occupy one man, nor could seven epilepsies afflict one woman; and the man who can believe that

insanity left a man and then seized upon swine has a credulity which could swallow mountains. Let men deny the inspiration of Scripture openly if they will, but let them not turn its assertions into arrant nonsense by such explanations.

That demoniacal possession existed before the days of Jesus we gather from the fact that an evil spirit took possession of King Saul. Josephus tells us that such possessions were common in the days of Solomon, who had power to cast out devils; and they seem to have been no new thing among the Jews, for their sons were in the habit of at least endeavoring to cast them out, as we learn from Jesus' reply to those who accused him of casting out devils by the aid of Beelzebub. But whether such possession exists at this day is a point on which we cannot speak confidently. There is no intimation in the Scriptures that such things should cease, any more than that leprosy and insanity should cease. We find casting out devils among the last recorded miracles of the apostles. Some of the Fathers

speaking of undoubted demoniacs in their day, and even in these last days missionaries meet in the East cases which seem to admit of no other explanation. Yet we cannot assert positively the present existence of demoniacs, for we do not know accurately in what insanity consists; and till we know at least that much we can say positively of no man, "He hath a devil." It may be that if Jesus should to-day pass through our lunatic asylums, or even through the streets of our cities, many voices would cry out, "We know thee, who thou art, the holy One of God; art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Besides the many instances in the East which missionaries have again and again remarked, and which we must admit are very similar to the demoniacs of the Bible if confidence is to be placed in such eye-witnesses as Ramsay, Wolff, and others, even in this Christian land cases are found which seem unaccountable as cases of simple insanity.

If there are demoniacs among us, can they be restored to their right mind? Not by

miraculous means, for the power to cast out devils ceased, I think, with the power to take up serpents and to drink unharmed any deadly thing. But it may be the miracle in healing demoniacs consisted in doing it instantly, using no ordinary means. Others had cured fevers, but Jesus banished them with a word ; and it may be that by the use of proper means demoniacs could be cured without a miracle. There was a case in England, a refined lady—the wife, I think, of a clergyman, and herself pious—who, exhibiting no other sign of insanity, with mind clear, acute, and vigorous on all points, suddenly became devilish in her disposition, malicious toward everybody, and blasphemous toward God, with a violent antipathy to all religious exercises. All the medical remedies failed utterly ; but she was gradually restored by repeated and earnest prayer, the transports growing less and less violent, till they ceased altogether. It may have been lunacy, but it was a lunacy which left her intellect as powerful as ever, and only made her disposition demoniacal.

We have no right to accuse those who were so possessed, of being worse sinners than others. Jesus had compassion on them, as upon the diseased ones brought to him, and in no instance does he represent them as specially guilty. I do not know precisely what Paul meant by delivering one to Satan that he might learn not to blaspheme; it is probable he referred to some bodily possession, for any other deliverance to Satan would rather teach the brother more terrible blasphemy.

But while there is no reason to regard as especially guilty those whose bodies devils possess, not so with those who wilfully seek intercourse with demons. That this is possible, that human beings can have familiar spirits and learn from them wondrous knowledge, Scripture clearly teaches. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," is a command which God frequently gave to Israel; and I am not enough of a Sadducee to believe that such repeated commands were issued against a sin that was never committed. Different forms of intercourse with evil spirits are forbidden by

Moses or mentioned by Isaiah ; they refer to the user of divination, the observer of times, the enchanter, the witch, the charmer, the consulter of familiar spirits, the wizard, the necromancer, the astrologer, star-gazer, monthly prognosticator. The Bible speaks of these as having real power. Remember the magicians of Egypt, the witch of Endor, and those cases in the New Testament as well ; Paul does not deny the divining powers of the damsel from whom he cast the devil, nor does he accuse her masters of imposture. If her skill had been only imposture on their part, their gains would not have been injured by Paul's words to the devil who possessed her ; but they were enraged at him because "they saw that the hope of their gains was gone."

How great may be the satanic inspiration of this class of persons is a thing which does not concern us ; we are forbidden to have anything to do with such arts : it behooves us, then, neither to examine nor to expose, but to let them entirely alone. Under the gospel dispensation, we are not authorized to put to

death either the witch or the idolater, but that gives us no right to practice either witchcraft or idolatry ourselves, or to encourage others in their practice. Whatever may have been the motive in consulting familiar spirits in ancient times, the chief motive now, it seems to me, is to make money out of the credulous. If all would obey the Bible and have nothing to do with such practices, witchcraft would cease more completely than the burning and drowning of witches. Observe, I do not say that all the pretences are false, but that to heed the words of the necromancers is wrong. The greater part I am sure is and always has been sheer imposture; but it would seem that there ever has been some devilish inspiration enabling men to tell things which it was impossible for them to know by human means. Many may remember the case of Lady Hester Stanhope. When some zealous and pious missionaries were trying to lead her to renounce Mohammedanism, it is said that a fakir, to convince her of the truth of that religion, told her, some hours before it happened, that

Aleppo would be destroyed by an earthquake, giving the time as that very day. Now, it was utterly impossible for him unaided to know that fact, distant as they were from the city, but it was entirely possible for a familiar spirit fully acquainted with the working of subterranean forces to know it. So, in too many well-authenticated instances for it to be all imposture, deaths have been foretold which the foreteller, of himself, could not have known, but which evil spirits seeing the working of obscure diseases might easily know.

God warned the children of Israel that false prophets would show signs and wonders ; but were they to heed such prophets ? Nay, they were to put them to death, though of course we have no such authority at this day. Whatever is superhuman about witchcraft, of whatever name, must come from either God, his angels, or the evil spirits. Now, God would never send, nor the holy angels transmit to us, a message through persons whom he has forbidden us to seek ; all, then, that is claimed to be superhuman, if it be not sheer impos-

ture, must be devilish. And let us beware how we repeat the sin of Eve by allowing Satan to draw us by our love of knowledge into investigating forbidden things. Pay no heed to his reasoning when he tells you that all knowledge was intended for you to acquire, and that God meant you to investigate everything which lies open to your mind. That reasoning is as false as it is frequent. There are, doubtless, facts in the world the knowledge of which would be injurious to us ; and it would be wrong for us to give them an examination. Even if evil spirits could tell us events in the future, it would be wicked for us to listen to them.

Fortune-telling, consulting spirits, observing signs,—all these things are forbidden. God reveals to us in his word what he thinks best for us to know. To ask from other sources for information which he has purposely withheld is as insulting to him as to expect that he would himself impart knowledge through forbidden channels. Do not have any dealings with “users of divination,” whether they act

in the stately heathen way of consulting stars and flights of birds, or in the contemptible modern substitute of coffee-grounds and wrinkles in the hand. Necromancers you must not encourage, whether they bring up Samuel before you in the light or set him to tipping tables and untying knots in the dark. But many Christians say, "We go simply from curiosity, and not because we have any faith in the spirits." What think you Moses would have said to an Israëlite whom he found present at the incantations of a witch? And what would Paul have said to a disciple who had gone to consult the oracle at Delphi? But is it true that they only wish to study the new development of natural law? Suppose that disciple had answered Paul, that he consulted the oracle in order to observe the effects of mephitic gas upon the pythoress? Study natural laws as such where no lying delusion is mixed with them to lead men into sin. Watch tables tip and furniture dance, as Galvani watched the twitching of the dead frog, where no pretence is made of spiritual influ-

ence. But when questions are asked and information, past, present, or future, sought from tables by you or by those whom your presence encourages, then do you not sin against God? For surely none but an idiot would question wood or attempt to get an intelligent answer from inert matter; then, when such questions are asked, they must be directed to spirits, and it is no longer the "scientific investigation of material phenomena."

That devils have inspired man, from time to time, with superhuman knowledge, I see no reason to doubt; and that Satan is the chief agent in modern "Spiritualism" in leading men to believe its utterances against the commands of God I verily believe. But in the modern raps and writings I doubt if there is anything save humbug and physical force. For wicked as devils are, they are not ignoramuses; they know how to spell, and understand the rules of grammar, which is more than can be claimed for many of the spirits who write through "mediums." Whenever these mediums in their accounts of the spirit-

ual world come incidentally across the track of scientific knowledge, they make the most egregious blunders, which devils would never be betrayed into doing. The demons know vastly more of nature than we, and they have the power to communicate their knowledge. The time may come when God will not restrain Satan's full power in this thing, and then the tables may rap and mediums may write things far above human knowledge; they may disclose laws of which we are ignorant and explain phenomena which have hitherto baffled our comprehension.

If tables shall indeed give us this wonderful information, will it be lawful, then, to heed their utterances? By no means; it will only prove that devils have taken the place of human operators. It will prove nothing more. They may even work miracles; for we are told in the book of Revelation that unclean spirits will work miracles. God is proving us, whether we will have nothing to do with them. If any should come to us saying, that Emanuel Swedenborg or Andrew

Jackson Davis has had a new revelation from heaven, or can foretell what is coming to pass, let us pay no heed to them. And if our informants go on, "But they have worked miracles," we may answer, "So will the beast in the Revelation, and so will Antichrist;"—"they can move wood without hands;" the magicians in Egypt did more: they turned rods into serpents and water into blood;—"they can foretell the future;" so did the familiar spirit of the witch of Endor;—"they can bring wind and lightning;" so did Satan in afflicting Job;—"but God has sent them with an additional revelation, and commissioned them to tell us that we have misunderstood the Bible—that it has a spiritual meaning as yet undiscerned;" that was what Satan brought to Eve—an additional revelation to show that God did not mean what he had said; we have suffered too much from her fall to care to repeat her belief in further contradictory revelations.

When God revealed his will under the old dispensation, he confirmed it with miracles,

and declared that another revelation was yet to be given. In the gospel dispensation he repeated many of the former miracles, and promised only a curse upon whosoever should add to this book, and he made the chief proof a miracle surpassing all previously wrought—the resurrection of Jesus. God may allow devils to work miracles, but they will not equal those given to confirm the Scriptures; they will fall far short—as much as the works of the magicians fell short of the plagues which desolated Egypt.

As time passes on toward the consummation of all things lying wonders and miracles will increase in the land, in order to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. If we rely upon human knowledge to guard us, we shall certainly fail. Only the shield of faith, only the sword of the Spirit, can enable us to stand. If an angel came from heaven and in our very presence did all the miracles recorded in Scripture to prove that he brought another revelation, we should stand behind our shield, and answer, “The Bible is perfect; it contains

all that is needed to make men wise unto salvation ; it gives no intimation of another revelation ; it requires no strengthening, for a perfect thing cannot be improved. Moreover, the second dispensation was crowned by a miracle superior to all others ; we have, then, a right to expect a grander miracle than Christ's resurrection to prove a third ; and he has told us what that will be. When we see him coming in his eternal glory, surrounded by angels, while the blast from the trump calls the dead from their graves in the earth and the sea, then we will believe."

But if the angel should work all the Bible miracles to disprove the revelation, still, steadily grasping our shield, we should answer, "You have done no more than is recorded to prove our Scriptures ; if they are false, you may be false also ; and if they are true, you are certainly false ; reason as well as faith requires us in such circumstances to stand by our Bible." And in whatever form or guise Satan may come, backed as he is by principalities and powers, by the rulers of the darkness

of this world, and by spiritual wickedness in high places, let us receive his darts on that trusty shield of faith, and strike manfully with that grand old sword-thrust, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed."

THE END.



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H M. Halter

AUG 14 1937

OCT 26 1938

Bruce Young

OCT 15 1938

JAN 24 1939

J. M. Halter

APR 13 1940

Jas. F. Ross, Jr. A.

DEC 7 1957

Phillip Pile

DEC 20 1957

MAY 1 1958

Julia Roe

MAY 15 1958

BT 966

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